



THE
BIBLE
FOR HOME
SCHOOL

BY
MRS. J. H. BROWN



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Section 1111

THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

SHAILER MATHEWS, GENERAL EDITOR

PROFESSOR OF HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE BOOKS OF AMOS, HOSEA
AND MICAH

JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH

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THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOKS

OF

AMOS, HOSEA, AND MICAH

BY

✓
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE BIBLE FOR HOME AND SCHOOL is intended to place the results of the best modern biblical scholarship at the disposal of the general reader. It does not seek to duplicate other commentaries to which the student must turn. Its chief characteristics are (*a*) its rigid exclusion of all *processes*, both critical and exegetical, from its notes; (*b*) its presupposition and its use of the assured results of historical investigation and criticism wherever such results throw light on the biblical text; (*c*) its running analysis both in text and comment; (*d*) its brief explanatory notes adapted to the rapid reader; (*e*) its thorough but brief Introductions; (*f*) its use of the Revised Version of 1881, supplemented with all important renderings in other versions.

Biblical science has progressed rapidly during the past few years, but the reader still lacks a brief, comprehensive commentary that shall extend to him in usable form material now at the disposition of the student. It is hoped that in this series the needs of intelligent Sunday School teachers have been met, as well as those of clergymen and lay readers, and that in scope, purpose, and loyalty to the Scriptures as a foundation of Christian thought and life, its volumes will stimulate the intelligent use of the Bible in the home and the school.

SHAILER MATHEWS.

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A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF
AMOS

INTRODUCTION

I. THE BOOK OF AMOS

I. CONTENTS

THE Book of Amos, as it now stands, falls into the following divisions:

I. The Superscription (1:1), stating the authorship, subject, and date of the book;

II. The Theme of the Prophecy (1:2);

III. Jehovah's Purpose to smite the Neighbors of Israel and Israel itself (1:3-2:16), being a series of oracles against Damascus, Moab, etc.;

IV. The Sin of Samaria and her Judgment (3:1-4:3), including a justification of the prophet's message, a statement of Samaria's incredible wickedness and of her surpassing splendor and luxury, and a denunciation of the sensualistic women;

V. Israel's Failure to learn from her Experience (4:4-13);

VI. The Doom of Israel and the Way of Escape (5:1-17), containing a dirge upon Israel, a call to repentance, and a picture of the coming grief;

VII. The Doom of Exile (5:18-27);

VIII. The Punishment of the Heedless Rich (6:1-7);

IX. The Desolation of Samaria (6:8-14);

X. Three Visions of Approaching Judgment (7:1-9), one as devouring locusts, a second as devastating drought, and the third as a plumb-line used for destruction;

XI. A Historical Interlude (7:10-17), being an account of Amos's preaching at Bethel;

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- XII. A Fourth Vision (8: 1-3) depicting Israel's End;
- XIII. The Sins of Israel and their Penalty (8: 4-14);
- XIV. A Final Vision of Inevitable Ruin (9: 1-4);
- XV. A Eulogy upon Jehovah's Power (9: 5-6);
- XVI. Israel without Special Privileges from Jehovah (9: 7-10);
- XVII. The Glorious Future of Israel (9: 11-15).

2. UNITY

The Book of Amos has suffered little at the hands of editors. The following passages, for reasons stated in the commentary in each case, are regarded as of later origin than the days of Amos. They reflect the historical conditions and the opinions of later times, viz. 1: 2, The Theme of the Book; 1: 9-10, The Oracle against Tyre; 1: 11-12, Oracle against Edom; 2: 4-5, Oracle against Judah; 4: 12-13 and 5: 8-9 and 9: 5-6, Doxologies, setting forth the power of God; 6: 9-10, detailed expansion of the description of the disease-smitten community; 9: 8-15, a modification of the foregoing judgment and a promise for the days to come.

With the exception of the last addition (9: 8b-15), these supplementary materials do not essentially affect the thought of the prophecy of Amos. It has come down as little stained by the hands that have transmitted it as any book of the Old Testament. It may, indeed, well be that the materials in the book are not now arranged in the order of their original utterance and that the visions of chaps. 7-9 chronologically preceded the addresses of chaps. 1-6; but even so, little is lost by the change, for there is but little development in the thought of the prophet from first to last. Amos came to the front, apparently, with his message clearly formulated in his own

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mind and found no need to change it afterwards to any serious extent.

3. TEXT

The text of the Book of Amos is one of the best preserved in the Old Testament. There are very few passages where the testimony of the versions and the obscurity of the Hebrew compel us to suppose a corruption of the text. The more noticeable corruptions are confined to the following verses: viz. 1:11, 15; 2:7; 4:3, 9; 5:26; 6:1, 2, 12.

4. LITERARY STYLE

The style of Amos is vigorous and effective. The simplicity and directness of his speech are notable. The presentation of his thought is always straightforward and clear. His figurative and illustrative material is largely drawn from outdoor life. The sounds that greeted his ears every day are again and again echoed in his utterances. Lions roar, birds flutter, bears growl, serpents hiss, locusts swarm, cattle low, wagons rattle, and horses prance in his pages. His language is vivid, concrete, and picturesque. It is poetry, in short, not prose, that he writes. The poetic quality of his oracles is given a fitting poetic dress. Parallelism, the well-known characteristic of Hebrew poetry, meets us everywhere. Not only so, but to a large extent his poetry falls into regular strophes, particularly in such passages as 1:3-2:8 and 4:4-11, with their repetition of lines and refrains. In 5:1 ff., use is made of the familiar elegiac rhythm, to bewail the fall of Israel. Boldness and strength, producing a certain type of grandeur, are characteristic of the poetry of Amos. He cares nothing for beauty for its own sake, and grace is only an incidental accompaniment of effective

strength. He is too tremendously in earnest to spend time upon delicacy and finesse.

II. THE TIMES OF AMOS

I. DATE

The date of the prophetic activity of Amos can be determined with a fair degree of definiteness. According to 7:10 f. he was a contemporary of Jeroboam II, who reigned from 783 to 743 B.C. The superscription (1:1) adds nothing to this information, since Jeroboam and Uzziah were contemporaries for some time, and the earthquake there mentioned cannot be dated. If 8:9 reflects a recent eclipse, such an event is known to have occurred in 763 B.C. The conquest of Gath by Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6) seems to be presupposed in 6:2. The downfall of Hamath (6:2) cannot be definitely placed, but may have occurred in connection with the campaigns under Adad-nirari, Shalmaneser, and Ashurdan, who repeatedly operated in northern and central Syria, between the years 806 and 765 B.C. The silence of Amos regarding the rise of Tiglath-pileser, from 745 B.C. on, and concerning the tribute paid to Assyria in 738 and the deportation of 734, seems to indicate clearly that his work was done before these stirring events took place. He is, consequently, generally placed in the period between 765 and 750 B.C.

2. HISTORICAL SITUATION

This date is supported by the fact of the vagueness of Amos's references to the agent, through whom Jehovah's wrath is to be executed upon Israel; cf. 3:11; 4:2 f.; 5:27; 6:14; 7:11, 17. The reason for this vagueness lies in the uncertainty of the historical situation of that

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time. At the death of Adad-nirari of Assyria, in 783 B.C., the Assyrian Empire entered upon a struggle for life. Between 783 and 773 B.C., Shalmaneser headed six campaigns against the kingdom of Urartu, which lay to the north of Assyria, in the region above Lake Van. In the course of this struggle, the foe on one occasion pressed down to within a few days' journey of Nineveh. The Syrian states farther west, who had leagued together against Assyria in 854 B.C. and again in 849 and 846, and had been harassed by her armies in almost each successive year from 843 to 828 B.C. and again from 806 to 797 B.C., were naturally vitally interested in the progress of the contest between Assyria and Urartu and cast in their lot with Urartu against Assyria. Hence, after repelling Urartu, Shalmaneser pushed west in 773 and attacked Damascus. His successors, Ashurdan and Ashurnirari campaigned against Hadrach in central Syria in 772 and 765 B.C. and defended Arpad against the Chaldi of Urartu in 754 B.C. This was the last flicker of Assyrian power in the West until the accession of Tiglath-pileser in 745 B.C. These were days of waning power in Assyria, and the future of the western lands was by no means clearly recognizable. Would Assyria revive and reassert her old-time power? Or would the peoples of Urartu succeed in displacing her power by their own? Amos did not undertake to answer this question for his contemporaries. He is content to indicate the north as the direction whence destruction is coming upon the states of Syria and Palestine.

During this same period, the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel was enjoying a prosperity that had not been equalled since the reign of Solomon. Egypt was powerless to trouble her, the last days of the 22d Dynasty being marked

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by internal conflicts and schisms that consumed all her energy. As a result of the Assyrian campaigns in the West, under Shalmaneser (859-825 B.C.) and Adad-nirari (812-783 B.C.), Syria, the old enemy of Israel, who had reduced her to a pitiable state in the reigns of Jehu (2 Kings 10:32) and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:7), had herself been rendered powerless and incapable of further molesting her southern neighbor. Jeroboam indeed, following up the successes of Joash (2 Kings 13:25), expelled Damascus completely from the territory of Israel (2 Kings 14:25-28). Judah, too, after Amaziah's vain attempt to assert independence from Joash (2 Kings 14:8-14), troubled Israel no more and probably paid regular tribute.

Freed thus from external conflicts, Israel was left to recuperate from her exhausting wars with Syria and to develop her own internal resources in peace. The resulting prosperity is reflected in the sermons of Amos. He tells us of palaces (3:10, 11; 6:8); "winter-houses," "summer-houses," houses with inlaid ivory finishings, and "houses of hewn-stone" (3:15; 5:11); and of house furnishings of silk and ivory (3:12; 6:4). He shows us the men absorbed in gainful, but unrighteous, business (8:4-6); the lust for wealth has blunted their moral consciousness. The abounding prosperity has produced a set of sensuous and materialistic men, who spend their time in the pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification (6:4-6). They are urged on in their unrighteous ways by their wives, contemptible, ease-loving, self-indulgent and sensual, lost to all true womanhood (4:1).

The natural result of such prosperity was a feeling of self-confidence in Israel (6:13). The leaders were untroubled by care and free from the disturbances of fear (6:1). Believing, as did all the people of that day, that

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prosperity was the indisputable evidence of the favor of Jehovah toward Israel, they rejoiced in the confidence that God was with them (5:14). They laughed at the suggestion of a day of judgment upon the nation, and put the thought far away from them (6:3). They revelled in their security and congratulated themselves upon their piety.

III. THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

I. THE MAN

To this care-free, joyous, and self-satisfied generation came Amos with his message of woe. The fact that he was a native of Judah did not render him or his message any more acceptable (cf. 7:12). His home at Tekoa (1:1) lay from ten to twelve miles to the south of Jerusalem. Situated upon the top of a high hill, it commanded a wide view, looking down upon the Dead Sea to the east and across to the hills of Moab. Here he carried on the twofold occupation of a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees (1:1; 7:14 f.). Thence he probably set out from time to time upon visits to the larger markets with the products of his flock and of his industry. Right at his door lay Bethlehem; Jerusalem but an hour's walk farther; Hebron about the same distance to the southwest; and Bethel less than twenty-five miles away. To such points as these he may have gone frequently in pursuit of his business, and even longer journeys are not out of the question. Through his own observations while upon such trips and through conversations with other men from more distant parts whom he encountered in Tekoa, in Jerusalem, Bethel, and elsewhere, he learned to know the conditions of life in Judah and in the North and heard more or less definite rumors of the doings of the neighboring

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peoples and of the affairs of the more distant Assyria and Urartu. Returning to his regular duties at Tekoa, the long, lonely vigils of his shepherd life afforded him abundant leisure for thought. As the simple, sincere, and keen-eyed shepherd pondered over what he had seen and heard and contrasted the luxury, vice, and heartlessness of the merchants and rulers with the poverty, the sufferings, and the wrongs of hard-working men belonging to his own social level, he became conscious of an irresistible appeal to forsake his flocks and to go forth as a prophet of the Lord (7 : 15).

2. THE MESSAGE

The message of Amos ran counter to all the beliefs of his day. His thought of God was in irreconcilable conflict with that of those to whom he preached. For them, Jehovah was Israel's God. His interests were bound up with those of his people. He could not but prosper them and protect them, as long as they fulfilled the obligations to him, which they recognized as resting upon them. To doubt regarding the continuance, — yea, the increase — of Israel's prosperity and power among the nations was to be disloyal to Jehovah. Religion and patriotism combined to develop in Israel a jubilant optimism. Prophets, priests, and people were at one, all carried away by an enthusiasm of faith and a zeal without knowledge. If some temporary misfortune, such as an earthquake or a drought, checked the flow of enthusiasm for a moment, it did but rush on and over the barrier with added momentum thereafter (cf. 4 : 4 ff.). Amos's generation was in the main satisfied, content to "let well enough alone." Its members were faithful to the traditions that had come down from the fathers, both in the social sphere and in

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that of religion. They were of good old conservative stock and resented change. Economic and political safety lay in strict adherence to the old paths. What better proof of the efficacy of this policy than the prevailing prosperity? Let him who proposes change take heed lest the whole social, economic, and political order come tumbling about his ears!

Amos was radically committed to a change, both in the social order and in the domain of religion proper. His idea of God far transcended national limits. For him, Jehovah was God of the nations, guiding their courses and ordering their fates (cf. 1:3-2:3; 9:7). Not that the nations and Israel were precisely on the same plane before Jehovah, but that Israel, enjoying special privileges from him, was under special responsibilities to him for the neglect of which she will be held strictly accountable (3:2; cf. 2:9 ff.). Amos also set himself against the popular conception of the cultus. His statements at times sound as though he would do away with the ritual completely; cf. 3:14; 4:4 f.; 5:5, 21-23, 25 f.; 8:10, 14; 9:1. But allowance must be made for the rhetorical exuberance of the prophetic indignation. It is scarcely conceivable that in such an age Amos ever seriously contemplated a worship without ritualistic elements. It is rather that he insisted that sacrifices and offerings, feasts and fasts, were not in themselves the chief desire of Jehovah. Jehovah was more concerned about the offerer than the offering. Ritual is good, but character is better; and ritual apart from character is worse than useless. Righteousness is the indispensable prerequisite to the continuance of the divine favor.

The great work of Amos was thus that of insisting that the religion of his day keep pace with the advancing, ethical

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conscience. The question with him, as contrasted with his opponents, was not, "What is the custom?" but, "What is right and just?" From this point of view, he studied the social order in Israel and pronounced it iniquitous. He saw wealth accumulating in the hands of the few, while the masses were reduced to the lowest depths of poverty. He charged the wealthy with cheating, robbery, and oppression and called down upon them the wrath of God. He knew the conditions whereof he spoke. The signs of great wealth were visible to all. The methods by which it had been attained were only too well known. As a peasant farmer, Amos had had sheep and wool to sell in the markets of the land. He had been compelled to take small prices for his products like all other sellers in his class. He and his neighbors barely managed to keep soul and body together through their industry. But those who bought their goods and who fixed the price to be paid fared sumptuously every day and clothed themselves in purple and fine linen. This sort of thing helped to kindle the prophetic fire in the bosom of Amos. With the return of prosperity to Israel upon the establishment of a relatively long period of peace and rest, those favored by position and power, or by the possession of exceptional business capacity, turned the stream of wealth into their own pockets. Not content with what could be done toward this by legal means, many allowed themselves to be carried across the line of legality by their thirst for gain. The purchase of court decisions (2:7; 5:11), the use of false weights and measures (8:5), and the general distortion of justice and right (5:7; 6:12) brought the poorer classes into an abject state of poverty (2:6; 5:11; 8:6), so that in many cases they were forced to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay their debts.

Amos was a fearless and outspoken critic of this state of things. He went through the North exposing the real situation. He assured the dominant classes that the state could not endure under such conditions. He declared it to be Jehovah's purpose to wipe the kingdom from off the face of the earth on account of its violence and wrong-doing. The only escape from this coming destruction was to be sought in a complete revolution of conduct (5 : 4-6, 14 f., 24). The religion of the day must be ethicized and socialized. The cry of the suffering poor must no longer ring in the ears of Jehovah.

In the announcement of the threatened doom, Amos makes use of an existing belief regarding a coming day of Jehovah. By his contemporaries, this day was looked upon as a time when Jehovah would manifest himself in marvellous fashion upon earth in the overthrow of all Israel's foes and in the exaltation of Israel to supremacy over the nations. Amos sees in the coming day the approach of Jehovah's punishment upon Israel herself for her own sins (5 : 18 ff.). He thus gives the old idea a new significance and makes of it a mighty ethical force, of which effective use was made by later prophets. He also brings the idea down out of the region of indefinite and hazy expectation and ties it up firmly with a set of historical events. He was apparently unable to name definitely the agent through whom Jehovah's will was to be wrought out upon Israel; but he was quite sure that one of the great northern peoples would come down with fire and sword as the scourge of God. Such preaching naturally aroused the antagonism not only of all the vested interests in general, but also of the rulers in particular, and he received orders from the court to flee for his life. Such is too often the fate of those

who set themselves against the order of things as they are.

Though a native of Judah, Amos did his work in the North. The reason lies in the fact that the North was by far the more important of the two halves of the Hebrew people and that the time of crisis for her was fast approaching. Moreover, as blood-relatives and as politically in the closest possible relation to Israel, the men of Judah were vitally interested in all that concerned Northern Israel. Disaster there meant imminent danger for Judah. Amos, apparently, had little hope for the success of his mission, and his words betray little emotion in regard to the message of doom it was his to deliver. But no man could have gone forth to preach such a message to men, without having entertained some hope. He who could be satisfied with a bare announcement of destruction as an end in itself would be less than human. The very fact that he preached shows that he hoped. Yea, further, it reveals his love for his brethren of the North. This affection shows itself also in his appeal to Jehovah on two occasions to stay his hand (7: 2, 5). But whatever his hopes or his fears, the fate he foresaw befell Israel within a quarter of a century or thereabouts after his death. His work as a prophet failed of its immediate purpose; while his ability to diagnose the social and political situation of Israel and to foretell its fate was completely established.

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THE MORE IMPORTANT ABBREVIATIONS

AV	The Authorized Version.
Gr.	Septuagint.
Heb.	. . . .	Hebrew.
m	. . . .	margin.
RV	. . . .	British Revised Version.
SV	. . . .	Standard American Revision.
Syr.	. . . .	Syriac.
Tg.	. . . .	Targum.
Vg.	. . . .	Vulgate.

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF AMOS

I. THE SUPERScription, 1 : 1

I : I

1. THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen¹ of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

II. THE THEME OF THE PROPHECY, 1 : 2

2. And he said,
The LORD² shall roar from Zion,
and utter his voice from Jerusalem ;
And the pastures³ of the shepherds shall mourn,
and the top of Carmel shall wither.

¹ Gr. *In Akkareim*.

² SV reads *Jehovah*, throughout the Old Testament.

³ m. *habitations*.

1. Among the herdmen, *i.e.* one of the herdmen, or better *shepherds*, having their headquarters at Tekoa, which was twelve miles to the south of Jerusalem. Saw is often equivalent to *prophesied*, as here. Israel, here and throughout the book, means the Northern Kingdom as distinguished from Judah. Uzziah is placed first, although his reign did not begin until after that of Jeroboam (2 Kings 15 : 1). The dates of these reigns cannot be precisely determined; but Jeroboam probably reigned from about 780 B.C. to 739 and Uzziah began about 766 B.C. The earthquake mentioned here is referred to again in Zech. 14 : 5; but nothing further is known of it. For the probable date of the activity of Amos, see the Introduction.

2. In figurative speech the message of the prophet is summarized as a prophecy of woe. The picture is that of a drought, so severe that the top of Carmel will be parched. This was one of the most beautiful and fertile spots in Palestine; cf. Isa. 33 : 9;

III. JEHOVAH'S PURPOSE TO SMITE ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS AND ISRAEL, 1: 3-2: 16

1. *An Oracle against Damascus, 1: 3-5*

3. Thus saith the LORD:
For three transgressions of Damascus,
yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof;¹
Because they have threshed Gilead
with threshing instruments of iron:²

¹ m. *revoke my word.*

² Gr. *because they sawed with iron saws the women with*

child of those in Gilead.

Nah. 1: 4. Jehovah will send terror upon the land, like that caused by the lion's roar. And Jehovah's attack will be as universal and disastrous as that of a total drought. The first half of the verse occurs also in Joel 3: 16. The entire verse in Amos has been considered as a later addition to the book. One of the chief reasons for this view is the fact that Jerusalem is made the seat of Jehovah's residence, while the prophecy concerns itself almost exclusively with the Northern Kingdom, and the law centralizing worship at Jerusalem was not adopted till 621 B.C. long after the days of Amos.

3. The prophet begins with a series of threats against some of the people surrounding Israel. **Damascus** was the capital of a district in Syria which had long been hostile to Israel and at times had reduced her to dire straits; cf. 2 Kings 13: 3-7. Such a message as this would naturally be pleasing to the prophet's audience. But in the time of Amos, Israel was undisturbed by Damascus and free to pursue the road to prosperity. The collocation of one number with the next higher, as in **three** and **four**, is a well-known method in Hebrew of indicating an indefinite number; cf. Jer. 36: 23; Prov. 30: 15, 18, 21, 29. **I will not turn away the punishment thereof**; this is a very ambiguous sentence in Hebrew. It may mean, "I will not revoke it," viz. the punishment determined upon already; or "I will not turn him back," viz. the foe from the north who is destined to bring disaster upon Damascus; or "I will surely punish him," viz. Damascus. This latter rendering suits the context best; but it is not so well supported by Hebrew usage as the other two. **Threshed Gilead** is probably descriptive of the barbarities

4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael,
and it shall devour the palaces¹ of Ben-hadad.
5. And I will break the bar of Damascus,
and cut off the inhabitant² from the valley of Aven,³
And him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of
Eden,⁴
and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto
Kir,
Saith the LORD.

¹ Gr. *foundations*. ² m. *him that sitteth on the throne*. ³ Gr. *On*. ⁴ m. *Beth-Eden*; Gr. *men of Harran*.

inflicted by Syria upon Northern Israel during the long years of warfare, especially in the reigns of Jehu and his son; cf. 2 Kings 8:12; 10:32 f.; 13:7. **Threshing instruments of iron**, *i.e.* probably, one of the instruments still used in modern Syria, *viz.* a sledge made of planks with sharp pieces of iron fastened upon its under side. This was drawn over the grain by oxen.

4. **Hazael** and **Ben-hadad** represent the kings of Damascus, the former being the name of the founder of the dynasty that held the throne in the time of Amos (2 Kings 8:7-13, 29; 10:32; 13:22), and the latter having been held by at least three kings (1 Kings 15:18 f.; 20:1 ff.; 2 Kings 13:3).

5. **The bar of Damascus** is a case of synecdoche, the part being placed for the whole. The bars used to fasten a city's gates are not infrequently representative of the defences of a city; cf. Judg. 16:3; 1 Kings 4:13; Jer. 51:30; Lam. 2:9). **The valley of Aven** cannot be definitely located. The name itself means "valley of vanity" and may be a sarcastic nickname coined by Amos for some well-known region in Syria. **The house of Eden** is probably better taken as *Beth-eden*; cf. similar names, *e.g.* Beth-lehem, Beth-rehob, Beth-car, Beth-shemesh. This place likewise is as yet unidentified. **Shall go into captivity**, *i.e.* will be carried away by a conqueror. This policy of deporting conquered peoples had been practised by Assyria since the days of Tiglath-pileser I (1100 B.C.) and was probably not confined to Assyria. Babylonia, at least, later adopted it. **Kir** is mentioned again in 9:7 as the place whence the Syrians had migrated into Syria. Its location is unknown. The complete overthrow of Damascus was effected by Tiglath-pileser IV of Assyria (745-727 B.C.) in 732 B.C. and is narrated in his Annals.

2. *An Oracle against the Philistines, 1:6-8*

6. Thus saith the LORD:
 For three transgressions of Gaza,
 yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
 thereof;
 Because they carried away captive the whole people,¹
 to deliver them up to Edom:
7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza,
 and it shall devour the palaces thereof:
8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
 and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon;
 And I will turn mine hand against Ekron,
 and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,
 Saith the Lord GOD.
-

¹ Heb. *an entire captivity.*

6. **Gaza** is named as representative of the Philistine confederacy, being probably the largest Philistine city and, perhaps, the centre of the slave trade here denounced. **The whole people**; *i.e.* not necessarily an entire nation, but more probably the population of some city or district. There was bitter hostility between the Hebrews and the Philistines at various times; *e.g.* Judg. 14:4; 15:11; 1 Sam. 4 ff., 17 ff.; Obad. 19; Isa. 11:14; 14:29-32; Jer. 25:20; 47; Zeph. 2:4-7; Ezek. 25:15-17; Zech. 9:5-7. Yet this outrage may not have been perpetrated upon the Hebrews at all, but upon some other community; cf. 2:1. We have no means of identifying the episode to which reference is made. Edom seems to have been the centre of a slave traffic among the nations of western Asia; cf. vs. 9. Those sold were captives taken in war and in plundering raids upon neighboring territory.

8. **Ashdod**, **Ashkelon**, and **Ekron** were three leading cities in the Philistine confederacy (cf. 1 Sam. 6:17). Gath is the only one not mentioned. Ashdod (3:9; Isa. 20:1) was an influential city situated three miles from the sea-coast and due west from Jerusalem. Ashkelon was directly on the coast and about nine or ten miles south of Ashdod; while Ekron was on the northern border of Philistia, about nine miles from the sea. **The remnant of the Philistines**, *i.e.* all the Philistines shall be destroyed wherever they may be.

3. *An Oracle against Tyre, 1: 9-10*

9. Thus saith the LORD:
 For three transgressions of Tyre,
 yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
 thereof;
 Because they delivered up the whole people¹ to Edom,
 and remembered not the brotherly covenant:²
10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre,
 and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

4. *An Oracle against Edom, 1: 11-12*

11. Thus saith the LORD:
 For three transgressions of Edom,
 yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
 thereof;

¹ Heb. *an entire captivity.*² Heb. *the covenant of brethren.*

9. **Tyre** and Sidon were the chief cities of Phœnicia. The former city was built upon an island about half a mile away from the mainland and by the time of Amos had become the leading city of Phœnicia. Israel's early relations with Tyre were friendly; cf. 2 Sam. 5: 11; 1 Kings 5: 1 ff.; 9: 13; 16: 31. But the prophets repeatedly threatened her with destruction; cf. Isa. 23; Jer. 25: 22; Ezek. 26: 15 ff.; Zech. 9: 2 f. Absolutely nothing is known regarding any such offence as that with which Tyre is here charged. The covenant referred to here is not known, since it can hardly be that made so far back as the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 5: 7) between Israel and Tyre. Apparently Tyre has violated its treaty with some neighboring state by raiding it and selling the captives into slavery to Edom. Tyre was smitten repeatedly by the Assyrian and succeeding empires down to the reign of Alexander.

The oracle against Tyre is probably a later insertion in the prophecy of Amos. It does but repeat the charge made against the Philistines; geographically Tyre should have preceded Philistia; and the form of the oracle is markedly different from that of the preceding in that it lacks the concluding "saith the Lord" and it has nothing corresponding to the last two lines in the oracles

- Because he did pursue his brother with the sword,
 and did cast off all pity,¹
 And his anger did tear perpetually,²
 and he kept his wrath for ever:³
12. But I will send a fire upon Teman,
 and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.⁴

5. *An Oracle against Ammon, I: 13-15*

13. Thus saith the LORD:
 For three transgressions of the children of Ammon,
 yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
 thereof;

¹ Heb. *destroyed his compassion.* Gr. *he outraged a mother upon the ground.*
² Syr. *and he retained forever his wrath.* ³ Gr. *he guarded unto victory.* ⁴ Gr. *the foundations of its walls.*

against Damascus and Gaza. It probably comes from an editor who felt that Tyre ought not to escape the judgment passed upon its neighbors.

11. Edom is the only nation ever recognized in the Old Testament as a brother of Israel. The relations between the two prior to the exile were not such as to give Israel great cause for complaint; cf. Numb. 20: 14-21; Deut. 2: 1-8; 1 Sam. 14: 47; 2 Sam. 8: 14; 1 Kings 9: 26; 11: 14-22; 22: 48 f.; 2 Kings 3: 8 ff.; 8: 20-22; 14: 7. Nor was Israelitish feeling against Edom apparently very bitter; cf. Deut. 23: 7. The exile brought a marked change, because Edom took advantage of Judah's weakness to plunder the territory of her neighbor and to encroach upon it; cf. Obad.; Isa. 63: 1 ff.; Mal. 1: 2 ff. His anger did tear is better rendered with Syriac and Vulgate, *he retained his anger.*

12. Teman is a synonym for Edom in Jer. 49: 7, 20; Obad. 9; Hab. 3: 3. Bozrah probably designates the chief city of Edom at the time of this oracle; cf. Gen. 36: 33; Isa. 34: 6; 63: 1; Jer. 49: 7 ff., 13, 22. It is perhaps represented by the little modern village of Buseire.

This oracle, too, probably was added by a later hand. The reasons for this opinion are as follows: (1) The attitude toward Edom here reflected was one that did not arise until after the Exile; (2) the lack of definiteness in the specification of Edom's

Because they have ripped up the women with child of
Gilead,

that they might enlarge their border :

14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
and it shall devour the palaces thereof,

With shouting in the day of battle,

with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind :

15. And their king¹ shall go into captivity,
he² and his princes together,

Saith the LORD.

¹ Gr. *its kings*; Syr. and others, *Milcom*.

² Gr., Syr., and others, *their priests*.

crime; (3) Petra, the capital of Edom in the days of Amos, is not mentioned, while Teman and Bozrah, which are named, are found chiefly in post-exilic writings; (4) the form of this oracle accords with that against Tyre rather than with those against Damascus and the Philistines.

13. **Ammon** had not been in conflict with Israel very frequently, so far as we can learn, from the time of David on; cf. 2 Sam. 8:12; 10; 12:26-31; 2 Chron. 20; 26:8; 27:5. Its territory lay across the Jordan and to the north of Moab, just east of the hill country of Gilead, which was occupied by Gad and Manasseh. The crime charged against Ammon is a definite act of horrible cruelty which seems to have been of recent occurrence; but there is no other record of it. **Ripped up the women with child**; the Hebrews themselves were not free from guilt on this score; cf. 2 Kings 8:12; 15:16; Hos. 10:14; 13:16; Nah. 3:10; Ps. 137:9. It was an act in keeping with the barbarities of crude times. **Enlarge their border**; there was no chance for the expansion of the Ammonites on the east, because of the ever encroaching desert. They had to choose between Moab on the south and Israel on the west and north, and they would naturally go in the direction in which the less effective resistance was offered.

14. **Rabbah**, or "Rabbath of the Ammonites" as it is more commonly called, was the chief city and was located near the sources of the river Jabbok, about 25 miles to the northeast of the Dead Sea. **Shouting**, *i.e.* the war-cries of the enemy. **Whirlwind**; the destruction is to include human and divine agencies, both coöperating to bring about the downfall of Ammon.

15. **He** is probably better read, with the versions, *his priests*. These, with the **princes**, comprising the two most influential

6. *An Oracle against Moab, 2: 1-3*

2. Thus saith the LORD:
 For three transgressions of Moab,
 yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
 thereof;
 Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom
 into lime:
2. But I will send a fire upon Moab,
 and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth;¹

¹ Gr. *its cities*.

classes in the state, represent the utter overthrow of the kingdom. Whether the Ammonites actually went into exile or not, we do not know. But they were completely subdued by the Assyrians and remained tributary to them from the time of Tiglath-pileser's campaign against Syria in 734 B.C.

1. **Moab** lay along the southern half of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, its northern boundary being in the vicinity of the river Arnon. It was occupied by a stronger and more aggressive people than the Ammonites; cf. Isa. 16:6; Zeph. 2:10; Jer. 48:19, 42. They had been made tributary to Israel by Omri and continued so through the reign of Ahab (2 Kings 3:4). But after his death (2 Kings 1:1; 3:5), a successful revolt was carried through by Mesha, King of Moab, whose record of the event is recorded and preserved for us upon the "Moabite stone." They were never again subject to Israel, so far as the records show. Disaster to Moab is threatened **because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime**. This was an act of impiety in the eyes of all ancient peoples, since the repose of the departed spirit depended upon the proper burial of the body. To destroy the body left the spirit to wander up and down upon the face of the earth. It is particularly noticeable that the Hebrew prophet is here announcing the coming of divine punishment upon Moab for a crime wrought, not against Israel, but against Edom, a foreign nation. This would seem to indicate that he thought of Jehovah as not confining his interest to Israel, but as extending it wheresoever the furtherance of high moral standards required the exercise of his power. It may be, of course, that at the time referred to here, to which we can get no clew, Edom was either a vassal or an ally of Israel, in which case an injury to Edom was tantamount to an injury to Israel itself. But the extension of

And Moab shall die with tumult,¹
with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof,
and will slay all the princes thereof with him,
Saith the LORD.

7. *An Oracle against Judah, 2:4-5*

4. Thus saith the LORD:
For three transgressions of Judah,
yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof;
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD,
and have not kept his statutes,

¹ Gr. *in weakness*.

Jehovah's interests beyond the borders of Israel is clearly contemplated by Amos; cf. 9:7.

2. **Kerioth** is mentioned also in Jer. 48:24, 41; but its identification is uncertain. It was evidently a leading city and it may have been identical with "Ar of Moab," for the two names never appear together. Moab is threatened with invasion, just like Ammon; the **tumult, shouting, and sound of the trumpet** are indicative of the attack of an enemy.

3. The term **judge** evidently here designates the king, one of whose functions it was to administer justice. Exile is threatened only in the cases of Damascus and Ammon. Nothing is known as to the history of Moab immediately after the days of Amos, except that she paid tribute to the successive Assyrian kings, beginning with Tiglath-pileser. She did venture upon war with Assyria in the reign of Sargon, but though defeated and amerced a heavy fine she continued her national existence until wiped out by the advancing flood of the Nabatæans after the exile of Judah.

4. **Judah** stands for the southern Kingdom. The only other references to it in Amos are 1:2; 6:1; 7:12; 9:11. In the time of Amos, the North and South seem to have been upon fairly good terms. Amos himself was a citizen of Judah (1:1). **Law** is here parallel with **statutes**. The former includes all the teachings of the prophets and the general directions regarding the religious and social life that issued from the priests from time to

And their lies have caused them to err,
after the which their fathers did walk :

5. But I will send a fire upon Judah,
and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

8. *An Oracle against Israel, 2 : 6-16*

6. Thus saith the LORD :
For three transgressions of Israel,
yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment
thereof ;

time. The statutes were such definite legal enactments as were in existence at the time this oracle was written. There is no reference here to the "law of Moses" as a whole, as now presented in the Pentateuch. **Their lies** is a designation of the idols which Judah has worshipped. These can render her no aid. Hence, they are nothing but lies; cf. Jer. 23 : 13 f. **Walk** is here equivalent to "worship and obey"; cf. Deut. 4 : 3; 11 : 28; 13 : 2, 4.

5. **Judah** and **Jerusalem** suffered severely at the hands of enemies more than once after the days of Amos, viz. in the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion in the days of Ahaz (Isa. chap. 7), in the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (Isa. chap. 36), in the Babylonian attack and deportation of 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24 : 10 ff.), and in the second attack ending in the fall of the city in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25 : 1 ff.).

These verses (2 : 4, 5) probably formed no part of the message of Amos, but were added by an editor who felt that Amos must have denounced the wickedness of his own people. In support of this treatment of the passage, it may be urged (1) that the charge against Judah lacks the concrete and specific details of crime characterizing the oracles against the other peoples; (2) that the form of this oracle is like that of the late prophecies against Tyre and Edom, rather than that of the genuine oracles; (3) that Amos would hardly have treated the sins of his own nation so briefly in comparison to his treatment of the sins of Israel; (4) that the spirit and language of the accusation are identical with those of Deuteronomy which arose more than a century after the time of Amos; (5) that its presence takes the edge off the oracle against Israel, the coming of which we are now bound to expect.

6. **Israel** will not escape in the great catastrophe that is to befall the world. Her sins are too many and too glaring. The

Because they have sold the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of shoes :

7. That pant after¹ the dust of the earth² on the head of
the poor,

and turn aside the way of the meek :

And a man and his father will go unto the *same*
maid,³

to profane my holy name :

8. And they lay themselves down beside every altar
upon⁴ clothes taken in pledge,⁵

¹ Gr. *that tread upon*. ² Gr. inserts here, *and struck with the fists*. ³ m. *young woman*.
⁴ Gr. omits *upon*. ⁵ Gr. *and tying their clothes together with cords they made veils about the altar*.

Israelites, who have listened to prophecies against their enemies with warm approval and a smug feeling of self-righteousness, are now startled out of their ease by this sudden attack of the prophet upon themselves. The first charge brought against them is that of social injustice. They have **sold** poor but **righteous** people into slavery for debts of the most trivial amount. Apparently, rich creditors were unable to make use of all those whom they seized for debt and consequently they farmed them out to others. There is no essential difference between peonage of that sort and slavery.

7. **That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor.** This is hardly a possible translation of the Hebrew text; nor is the present Hebrew text susceptible of translation. Following the hint given by the Septuagint, we suppose that the original reading was, *that buffet the heads of the poor*, and that the remainder of the sentence is due to a mistaken interpretation of the original which was preserved alongside of the true reading and was at last mixed with it. The **way** is the right dealing due toward the poor, the course of justice. The phrase **go unto the maid** is of doubtful meaning. Most naturally it implies that the father sets the son the example of indulgence in sexual license, by patronizing either ordinary harlots or temple prostitutes. In either case **Jehovah's name** would be brought into disrepute or treated as an unholy thing as the result of such action.

8. **And they lay themselves, etc.** Better, *and they spread out clothes taken in pledge beside every altar*. Thus they not only desecrate the sanctuary by their immorality, but they wrong the

- And in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.¹
9. Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them,
 whose height was like the height of the cedars,
 and he was strong as the oaks ;
 Yet I destroyed his fruit from above,
 and his roots from beneath.
10. Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,
 and led you forty years in the wilderness,²
 to possess the land of the Amorite.
11. And I raised up³ of your sons for prophets,
 and of your young men for Nazirites.

¹ Gr. from *sycophants*; Syr. *old.* ² Syr. adds *and brought you in.* ³ Gr. *and I took.*

poor at the same time and violate one of the ancient laws; see Exod. 22: 26. **In the house of their God** is better rendered *in the houses of their gods*; that is, in the local sanctuaries all over the land; not merely in the temple at Jerusalem. The **wine of such as have been fined** was probably that purchased with money obtained by the unjust imposition of fines upon the poor.

9. **Amorite** is the name used by Amos to designate the occupants of Canaan at the time when Israel took possession of the land. Tradition had magnified their height and strength until they were thought of as veritable giants; cf. Numb. 13: 22 ff., 33; Deut. 1: 28; 2: 10, 20; 3: 11. They were, notwithstanding their strength, **destroyed** root and branch by Jehovah. Yet such a favor to Israel seems to have been insufficient to keep her loyal to Jehovah's commands. Other statements regarding the conquest do not represent the destruction of the Amorites as having been so complete as Amos reports, e.g. Exod. 23: 32 f.; 34: 12; Judg. 1: 27-36.

10. The deliverance from **Egypt** was the great outstanding fact in evidence of Jehovah's power and of his love for Israel. Scriptures never tire of laying emphasis thereon; cf. Ex. 19: 4; Deut. 32: 10; Ps. 78: 53; Jer. 2: 2.

11. When Moses and Joshua, the leaders of the Exodus and the Conquest, passed away, other leaders were needed. These were furnished by Jehovah in the form of **prophets** and **Nazirites** taken from among the Israelites themselves. Of the former, the best known prior to Amos are Deborah, Samuel, Gad, Nathan,

Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the
LORD.

12. But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink;
and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.
13. Behold, I will press *you* in your place,
as a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.¹
14. And flight shall perish from the swift,²
and the strong shall not strengthen his force,
Neither shall the mighty deliver himself:
15. neither shall he stand that handleth the bow;
And he that is swift of foot shall not deliver *himself*:
neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver him-
self:

¹ m. *I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.* Gr. *Therefore, behold, I roll under you as the cart rolls that is full of straw.* ² m. *refuge shall fail the swift.*

Ahijah, Elijah, Micaiah, and Elisha. Of the latter order, the most conspicuous members known are Samson and Samuel. The Nazirite was one set apart by a special vow to the service of God.

12. But Israel spurned these gifts of God. **Ye gave the Nazirites wine**, which was evidently a thing from which their vows constrained them to refrain; cf. 1 Sam. 1: 11; Judg. 13: 4, 5, 7, 14; Numb. 6: 2-21. **Prophecy not**; for examples of such prohibition, cf. 7: 13, 16; 1 Kings 13: 4; 18: 4; 19: 2; 22: 8, 26 f.; 2 Kings 1: 9 ff.; 6: 31.

13. With this verse begin the threats of punishment for the sins described in the foregoing verses. The translation of the verse is very uncertain, since the verb used occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. Perhaps, it should be rendered thus, *Behold, I will make a shaking under you as a cart shakes that is full of sheaves.* The language is most naturally interpreted as descriptive of an earthquake. Further, the terror and helplessness depicted in the following verses are the natural effect of such a shock. Amos did not confine his threats to one kind of punishment. He sometimes threatened war (3: 11; 5: 27; 6: 14), sometimes drought, pestilence, etc. (7: 1-6), sometimes eclipse and a world cataclysm (8: 8, 9).

15 f. Neither speed, strength, courage, skill in combat, nor horsemanship will avail to secure escape in the frightful catastro-

16. And he that is courageous among the mighty¹
shall flee away naked in that day,
Saith the LORD.

IV. THE SIN OF SAMARIA AND HER JUDGMENT, 3: 1-4: 3

1. *A Justification of the Prophet's Message, 3: 1-8*

3. Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying,
2. You only have I known
of all the families of the earth:
Therefore I will visit upon you
all your iniquities.

¹ Gr. and the strong shall not find his heart in strength.

phe that is to come. **Naked**, *i.e.* not waiting to provide himself with clothes or weapons, or casting aside such things as impediments to his flight, Complete rout and demoralization will prevail. **In that day**, *i.e.* the day of Jehovah, the day of disaster, which is described more fully in 5: 18 ff.

3: 1. **Children of Israel** is defined by the following clause as including both Israel and Judah. The oracle concerns itself immediately only with Israel proper; but the two peoples were so closely related in all their interests that what was of importance to the one was likewise significant for the other. The prophet starts his discourse by speaking of Jehovah, but at once slips into the use of the first person as though Jehovah himself were speaking. The prophets were not careful to distinguish between themselves and Jehovah in their utterances, because they regarded themselves as but the spokesmen of Jehovah.

2. **You only have I known**, *i.e.* having power to choose any of the various peoples, Jehovah had fixed his love upon Israel only. This conception of Jehovah as sustaining an especially close relation to Israel was shared in by all the prophets as well as by the nation as a whole. **Therefore I will visit upon you**, *i.e.* special privilege involves corresponding responsibility. The greater the love that Israel has enjoyed, the more heinous are her sins.

-
3. Shall two walk together,
except they have agreed? ¹
4. Will a lion roar in the forest,
when he hath no prey?
Will a young lion cry out of his den,
if he have taken nothing?
5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth,²
where no gin is set for him?
Shall a snare spring up from the ground,
and have taken nothing at all?
6. Shall the trumpet be blown in a city,
and the people not be afraid?
Shall evil befall a city,
and the LORD hath not done it?
-

¹ m. made an appointment. Gr. if they do not know one another. ² Gr. fall upon the ground.

3. The prophet now cites several illustrations of the law of cause and effect, for the purpose of establishing the proposition that his prophetic message has been given him by Jehovah. He is under a prophetic compulsion to speak as he does. **Except they have agreed**; better, *are agreed*, or as in margin. The fact that the two **walk together** is the result of an underlying prior cause.

4. The lion's roar is caused by the proximity or the possession of prey. Then the prey may well tremble. Israel seems deaf to the roar of the lion which portends her destruction.

5. The words **in a snare** may be mistaken repetition of the word **snare** in the next question. The first question then becomes simply — does a bird fall to the ground without any cause? Or, approached from another side, does a **snare spring up** without cause? Different kinds of traps for catching birds and small game are spoken of here.

6. The **trumpet** meant is that which indicates the approach of an enemy to the attack. The people do well to be **afraid** when they hear it. **Evil** is here not moral evil, but calamity or disaster. Whenever such comes, Jehovah is responsible for the visitation. This was the old prophetic theology, which made all disaster due to Jehovah's wrath against sin.

7. Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing,
but he revealeth his secret¹ unto his servants
the prophets.
8. The lion hath roared,
who will not fear?
The Lord GOD hath spoken,
who can but prophesy?

2. *Samaria's Wickedness would astonish Neighboring Peoples, 3:9-11*

9. Publish ye in² the palaces³ at Ashdod,⁴
and in² the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say,
Assemble yourselves upon the mountains⁵ of Samaria,
and behold what great tumults⁶ are therein,
and what oppressions in the midst thereof.

¹ Gr. *his instruction.* ² m. *upon.* ³ Gr. *lands.* ⁴ Gr. *in the Assyrians.*
⁵ Gr. and Syr. *mountain.* ⁶ Gr. *wonderful things.*

7. This verse reveals the assurance of Amos that he knew the full purpose of Jehovah regarding Israel. **His secret** is the plan or purpose known only to himself and to those to whom he chooses to reveal it. The prophets are favored with the possession of this purpose. Consequently, when they speak, men should listen eagerly.

8. **The lion hath roared**, *i.e.* warning of disaster has been given. Those who have heard it can but fear. **Hath spoken**, *i.e.* in the ears of his people; and the message is so clear and plain that all should be able to **prophesy**. Amos thus represents himself as only uttering what has been clearly revealed by Jehovah and should be discerned by all. Perhaps he alludes here to certain events or conditions in western Asia which seemed to him to threaten destruction to Israel. In any case, he is speaking the truth of Jehovah and Israel should listen. Such preaching is not without significance and may not be safely ignored.

9. The prophet conceives of Samaria's sins as so great that if the nobles of Philistia and Egypt were to see them for themselves, they would be stricken with astonishment or horror. **Mountains** is better read in the singular, with Gr. and Syr., since **Samaria**

10. For they know not to do right,¹ saith the LORD,
 who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.
11. Therefore thus saith the Lord God,
 An adversary *there shall be*, even round about the
 land:²
 And he shall bring down thy strength from thee,
 and thy palaces shall be spoiled.
3. *The Luxury and Splendor of Samaria and Bethel will be
 brought to Nothing*, 3:12-15
12. Thus saith the LORD:
 As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion
 two legs, or a piece of an ear;

¹ Gr. *not the things which shall be before her*. Syr. *not to do reproof*. ² Gr. *Tyre round about — thy land will be deserted*. Vg. *The land will be oppressed and surrounded*. Syr. *An enemy will march about the land*.

here denotes the city, not the kingdom as a whole. Samaria was splendidly situated, upon a hill about 300 feet high, and was strongly fortified. The Assyrians besieged it for three years, before they could conquer it. The social wrongs of the city appeared so terrible to the simple, but clear-sighted countryman, that he describes them as **tumults**. The normal social order is turned upside down. Chaos and confusion rule in the moral world.

10. **They know not**, *i.e.* they have become so habituated to wrong-doing that they have forgotten how to do right. It is second nature for them to rob and defraud. That Amos is here describing the rich is clear from the phrase **in their palaces**. The prophets were always the defenders of the poor. By **robbery and violence** are meant the wealth and luxury obtained by unjust and oppressive methods.

11. **An adversary**, etc.; this sentence is very difficult and obscure in the Hebrew and is probably corrupted from a better text, which is represented by the Syriac translation. In any case, a foreign invasion is here threatened. The **strength** and pride of the land, *viz.* the **palaces**, are to be laid low. That which the rich owners have gained by robbery of the weak will now in turn be **spoiled**, *i.e.* carried off as plunder by the invader.

12. The note struck in the last lines of the foregoing section is

- So shall the children of Israel be rescued ¹
 that sit in Samaria
 In the corner of a couch,
 and on the silken cushions of a bed.²
13. Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob,
 saith the Lord God, the God of hosts.
14. For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of
 Israel upon him,
 I will also visit the altars of Beth-el,

¹ Syr. *be carried away.*
Damascus on a bed.

² m. According to some ancient versions and MSS. *in*

taken up again here. **Two legs, or a piece of an ear** represent the fragments gathered up by the shepherd and presented as evidence of the fate that had befallen his sheep; cf. Exod. 22:13. **Lions** were a common foe to flocks in Palestine; cf. 1 Sam. 17:34 f.; Gen. 37:33. Just as the sheep was practically a total loss, so will Israel be almost completely destroyed. **Sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.** Whatever the precise significance of these references to household furniture may be, the general meaning is clearly a protest against the self-indulgence and luxury of the wealthy nobles of Samaria. The text here is very uncertain.

13. The address is not to any particular persons, but is of a rhetorical character. **House of Jacob** is here the Northern Kingdom, as appears from the specific mention of Bethel in v. 14. **The Lord God, the God of hosts**; this is the only appearance of this full title for Jehovah in the Old Testament.

14. Visitation for sin will begin at the sanctuary. This is not due to any objection to the existence of a shrine at **Beth-el**, for the attitude of exclusiveness which limited all worship to the temple at Jerusalem did not become the law of the land till the days of Josiah. Bethel was one of the oldest sanctuaries in Israel; cf. Gen. 12:8; 35:7. But the Israelites were indulging in a false sense of security on the ground of their religion. They believed that so long as they kept up the performance of the ritual and observed the established convention in morals and religion, they could be sure of the protection of Jehovah, their God. But Amos is seeking to convince Israel that the religion of Jehovah is a far deeper and more searching thing than they have supposed. They do not know the character of Jehovah and thus cannot

And the horns of the altar shall be cut off
and fall to the ground.

15. And I will smite the winter house with the summer
house ;

And the houses of ivory shall perish,
and the great ¹ houses shall have an end,
Saith the LORD.

4. *The Selfish and Besotted Women of Samaria are doomed
to become Exiles, 4: 1-3*

4. Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan,
that are in the mountain of Samaria,
Which oppress the poor, which crush the needy,
which say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink.

¹ m. *many*.

please him by a cultus that rests upon a total misunderstanding of his requirements. Consequently the temples which Israel had regarded as the outward assurance of its safety will be the first to fall beneath the attack of the foe. No more startling message than this could have been delivered to his generation by Amos. **The horns of the altar** were of importance in the celebration of certain sacrifices; cf. Lev. 4: 30.

15. **The winter house with the summer house**; these were probably but different parts of one and the same structure; cf. Judg. 3: 20; Jer. 36: 22. One of the inscriptions recently found at Zinjirli, in northern Syria, sets forth the work of Bar-rekub, King of Shamal, a vassal of Tiglath-pileser IV of Assyria, in decorating the palace of his fathers, and says of the result, "it is for them a summer house and a winter house." Such large houses were, of course, possible only for the rich. **Houses of ivory**, *i.e.* finished or adorned with ivory, are referred to also in 1 Kings 22: 39 and Ps. 25: 8. Ivory was of course very costly; cf. 1 Kings 10: 18.

1. **Kine of Bashan**, a derogatory characterization of the women of Samaria; cf. Isa. 3: 16; 4: 1. **Bashan** lay to the east of the Jordan, north of the river Yarmuk, and was famous for its pasturage and fat cattle; cf. Mic. 7: 14; Deut. 32: 14; Ezek. 39: 18. **Which oppress the poor, which crush the needy**, not

2. The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness,
that, lo, the days shall come upon you,
That they shall take you away with hooks,
and your residue with fish hooks.¹
3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight
before her;²
and ye shall cast *yourselves* into Harmon,³
Saith the LORD.

V. ISRAEL HAS FAILED TO LEARN BY EXPERIENCE,

4: 4-13

4. Come to Beth-el, and transgress;
to Gilgal, *and* multiply transgression;

¹ Gr. *burning plagues will cast you into caldrons heated from beneath.* ² Gr. *and ye shall be brought forth naked before one another.* ³ m. The ancient versions vary in their rendering of this clause. The text is probably corrupt. AV *and ye shall cast them into the palace.* AV m. *and ye shall cast away the things of the palace.* Gr. *and you will be cast out into the mountain Romman.* Vg. *and you will be cast out into Armon.* Syr. *and they will be cast out to the mountain of Armenia.*

directly, but through the demands they make upon **their lords**. The husbands in the endeavor to gratify the wishes of their sensuous wives are driven to methods which involve bringing the poor and weak to destitution. **Let us drink**; cf. Isa. 28: 1 ff. All this suffering is brought about simply to provide means for a debauch on the part of the rich oppressors.

2. **By his holiness**, *i.e.* by himself, for holiness is of the essence of God. **Days**, *i.e.* days of judgment and punishment. **Hooks, fish hooks**; the figure changes here apparently from cattle to fish and suggests the total helplessness of fish when caught by hook and line; cf. Hab. 1: 14. **Your residue**, *i.e.* the last of you; not one shall escape.

3. **The breaches** are those made in the walls of the city by the besieger. They are to go out, not as fugitives, but as captives, marching in the line of prisoners, **every one straight before her**, *i.e.* straight ahead. **Shall cast yourselves** is probably better read *shall be cast*. **Into or toward Harmon**; no such place is elsewhere mentioned. Hence its location is unknown. Indeed it is by no means certain that we have a place name here, since the text is hopelessly corrupt. See the renderings of the versions cited above.

And bring your sacrifices every morning,
and your tithes every three days;

5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving¹ of that which
is leavened,²

and proclaim freewill offerings³ and publish them:⁴
For this liketh you, O ye children of Israel,
saith the Lord God.

6. And I also have given⁵ you
cleanness⁶ of teeth in all your cities,

¹ Gr. and they read outside of law. ² Targ. of violence. ³ Syr. and vow vows.
⁴ Syr. and pay. Gr. joins with following clause and renders, announce that the
children of Israel loved these things. ⁵ Gr. will give. ⁶ Gr. toothache. Syr. and Targ.
bluntness.

4. **Come to Beth-el**, etc. The request is ironical, as the remainder of the clause clearly indicates. The prophet practically condemns the whole cultus, wherever carried on. The reason for this is that Israel has no proper conception of Jehovah and thinks to guarantee prosperity by zealous performance of the ritual. In such circumstances, every act of the cultus is a fresh insult to Jehovah. **Sacrifices every morning** and **tithes every three days** are of course illustrations of extreme zeal in the cultus. The Deuteronomic law (14: 28; 26: 12) called for tithes every three years; let the Israelites bring them every three days. Even that will be of no value, so long as the fundamental necessity of the religious mind is lacking.

5. The use of **leavened** bread in the sacrifices in general was prohibited by the early law; cf. Exod. 23: 18. But its use in connection with the thank-offering is especially enjoined in Lev. 7: 13; cf. Lev. 2: 11. But Amos is not passing judgment upon the question whether leavened bread was or was not legitimate in sacrifice; he is rather describing the cultus as it was actually conducted and condemning the shallow optimism that regarded it as the essential thing in the religion of Jehovah. To **proclaim freewill offerings**, which were voluntary gifts expressive of gratitude to Jehovah, was wholly contrary to the spirit and purpose of such offerings; cf. Luke 18: 9-14; Matt. 6: 1 ff. **For this liketh you**, *i.e.* so you love to do; cf. Jer. 5: 31.

6. **And I also have given**; the pronoun "I" is emphatic and may be given its proper significance thus, *and yet it was I who gave*. Israel has gone on blindly and heedlessly, not recognizing in the calamities that have befallen her the purpose of these

- And want of bread in all your places :
 yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
7. And I also have withholden the rain from you,
 when there were yet three months to the harvest :
 And I caused it to rain upon one city,
 and caused it not to rain upon another city :
 One piece was rained upon,
 and the piece whereupon it rained ¹ not withered.
8. So two or three cities wandered ² unto one city to
 drink water, and were not satisfied :
 Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
9. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew : ³
 the multitude of ⁴ your gardens and your vineyards

¹ Gr. *I will rain.* ² Gr. *will assemble.* ³ Syr. adds *and with hail.* ⁴ Gr. *you have multiplied.*

chastisements from Jehovah. Famine was always looked upon in Israel as due to the wrath of Jehovah; cf. 2 Sam. 21:1 ff.; 1 Kings 17:1 ff. Amos protests that Israel has not understood her rebuke, but has contented herself with multiplying sacrifices to Jehovah, instead of turning to him with hearts morally renewed. **Yet have ye not returned**, etc.; this is a poetic refrain occurring at the close of the several stanzas of this poem; cf. vss. 8, 9, 10, 11.

7. The withholding of rain at a time within, or until, **three months to the harvest** was necessarily fatal to the crops. The rainy season of Palestine continues from January into April. More or less intermittent showers fall from October through December. But the rainfall is often very unevenly distributed. Thomson, for example, tells of having seen the Jordan valley dry and parched when the region around Tiberias was clothed in luxuriant green, with abundant flowers. The drought here described was, of course, the cause of the famine mentioned in vs. 6; but it is enlarged upon in order to bring clearly into view the pangs of thirst it involved.

9. The **blasting** was that caused by the parching east wind (cf. Isa. 27:8; Ezek. 17:10); while the **mildew** was brought about by a combination of dampness and great heat. **The**

and your fig trees and your olive trees hath the palmerworm devoured:

yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

10. I have sent among you the pestilence¹ after the manner of Egypt:

your young men have I slain with the sword,
and have carried away your horses;²

And I have made the stink of³ your camp⁴ to come up even into your nostrils;

yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

11. I have overthrown *some* among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,

And ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning:
yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

¹ Gr. and Vg. *death*. ² Heb. *with the captivity of your horses*. ³ Gr. *in fire*. ⁴ Syr. *your stench*.

multitude of represents a very abnormal construction in Hebrew; it is probably better to follow many scholars here and translate, *I have laid waste*. The **palmerworm**, literally *the gnawer*, is a designation for the locust, whose ravages were among the worst scourges that could befall an agricultural people; cf. 7:1 f. The combination of scourges here detailed would mean practically the destruction of all the means of subsistence.

10. **After the manner of Egypt**, *i.e.* terrible and devastating like the plagues sent upon the Egyptians in connection with the Exodus of the Hebrews. The young men **slain with the sword** are probably those who had fallen in the long struggle between Israel and Damascus; cf. 2 Kings 8:12, 28; 10:32 f.; 13:3-7, 22-25. **Horses** seem to have been looked upon with particular disfavor by some of the religious leaders of Israel, because the use of them in war seemed to be a confession of distrust in Jehovah's power to deliver his people; cf. Deut. 17:16; Isa. 30:16; Ps. 20:7; 33:17. The **stink of your camp** doubtless means the stench arising from the corpses of the slain, which also gave rise to the **pestilence** already mentioned.

11. **I have overthrown among you**, *i.e.* probably by an earthquake or volcanic eruption involving the destruction of one or more towns. The overthrow of **Sodom and Gomorrah** is an illus-

12. Therefore thus¹ will I do unto thee, O Israel:
and because I will do this unto thee,
 prepare to meet² thy God, O Israel.
13. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains,³ and createth
 the wind,
 and declareth unto man what is his thought,⁴
 That maketh the morning darkness,
 and treadeth upon the high places of the earth;
 The LORD, the God of hosts, is his name.

¹ Vg. *these things*. Tg. *what*. ² Gr. and Syr. *to call upon*. ³ Gr. *he that takes away thunder*. ⁴ Gr. *man his anointed*. Syr. *how great is his glory*. Tg. *what are his works*. Vg. *his declaration*.

tration of the completeness and terror of the destruction that has come; cf. Gen. chap. 19. A brand plucked out of the burning betokens a marvellous deliverance. Vss. 12 and 13 are quite generally conceded to be a later addition to the prophecy, which has been substituted for something that was more definite and specific and so better suited to the needs of Amos's times than to those of later ages.

12. **Therefore**, *i.e.* because past corrections have been of no avail. **Thus** is by reason of its very indefiniteness more terrible and affrighting than a specific statement might have been. It looks forward to punishments to come and not backward upon those already experienced. The scope of **this** is identical with that of the preceding "thus." **Prepare to meet thy God** is a call to repentance. Israel is urged to present herself before God in such a state of mind as to appease his wrath that she may thus escape the threatened doom.

13. This catalogue of the activities of Jehovah is to emphasize the impossibility of resisting or escaping his power and therefore the necessity of seeking his pardon. He made the visible world and he sustains it with all of its phenomena as only an omnipotent God could. He makes and controls the winds and storms and causes the interchange of darkness and light. **What is his thought**; the translation of this clause is very uncertain; cf. the renderings of the Versions cited above. The text is probably corrupt. If RV be the correct rendering, it seems to mean that Jehovah is lord not only of the outer world, but also of the thoughts of men, which have their source in him.

VI. THE DOOM OF ISRAEL AND HER WAY OF ESCAPE,

5: 1-17

1. *A Dirge over Prostrate Israel*, 5: 1-6

5. Hear ye this word which I take up for a lamentation over you, O house of Israel.
2. The virgin of Israel is fallen;
she shall no more rise:
She is cast down¹ upon her land;
there is none to raise her up.
3. For thus saith the Lord GOD:
The city that went forth a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
And that which went forth a hundred shall have ten
left,
to the house of Israel.
4. For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel,

¹ m. *lieth forsaken*.

1. **A lamentation**, *i.e.* the dirge that was chanted upon the occasion of the death of an individual; cf. 2 Sam. 1: 17; Ezek. 28: 12; 32: 2; 2 Chron. 35: 25. The dirge continues through vs. 3. The prophet pronounces this dirge in anticipation of the downfall or death of the nation. He transports himself and his audience in imagination to the days following the disaster he expects, and he speaks from the standpoint of that future time. **House of Israel** here means the Northern Kingdom, as appears from the mention of the "house of Joseph" in vs. 6.

2. **Virgin of Israel** occurs here for the first time; its only other appearances are Jer. 18: 13; 31: 4, 21. The point of the figure is probably in that it represents Israel as free and untrammelled by the yoke of any foreign master. Her condition will be hopeless, there being **none to raise her up**.

3. The population will be almost wiped out, having only one tenth left of its former numbers. The reference may be merely to the fighting strength of the people, but it is more natural to apply the statement to the population as a whole.

- Seek ye me, and ye shall live :
5. but seek not Beth-el,
Nor enter into Gilgal,
and pass not to Beer-sheba :
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
and Beth-el shall come to nought.¹
6. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live ;
lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,²
And it devour and there be none to quench it in
Beth-el.³

¹ m. become vanity (Heb. *Aven*). Gr. be as though not existing. ² Gr. lest the house of Joseph be burned like fire. ³ Gr. for the house of Israel.

4. **Seek ye me, and ye shall live : but seek not Beth-el**, etc. The only escape from the destruction just described as awaiting Israel is to be found through seeking Jehovah. But this is exactly what the Israelites claimed to be doing in all their cultus. Hence Amos proceeds to define his meaning more closely by setting the worship at the various local shrines in contrast with the worship of Jehovah. Jehovah is truly sought only when the worshipper is intent upon doing righteousness and justice. No abundance of or diligence in ritual can compensate for the absence of a passion for the right.

5. **Beer-sheba** was located in the extreme south, being commonly contrasted with Dan in the extreme north, as representative of the farthest limits of Israel in those directions. It was on the road to Egypt and thirty miles to the southwest of Hebron. It is not likely that citizens of the North visited Beersheba in any great numbers ; hence, it is probably mentioned as a suggestion to Judah that she too is in need of reformation. **Beth-el shall come to nought** is perhaps better read *Bethel shall become Beth-aven*, i.e. the place now called "house of God" shall become "house of idolatry" ; cf. Hos. 4 : 15. The fate of Bethel will be a warning to all idolaters.

6. **Break out like fire** is perhaps better read, *send fire* ; cf. 1 : 4, 7, 10, 12, 14 ; 2 : 2, 5. **Beth-el** is singled out as representative of the entire Northern Kingdom, since it was the centre of the cultus which was so far removed from the prophet's ideal of true religion.

2. *Israel must repent and forsake her Sins, 5: 7-15*
7. Ye who turn¹ judgement to wormwood,²
and cast down³ righteousness to the earth.
8. *Seek him* that maketh the Pleiades and Orion,⁴
and turneth the shadow of death⁵ into the morning,
And maketh the day dark with night ;
that calleth for the waters of the sea,
And poureth them out upon the face of the earth ;
the LORD is his name ;
9. That bringeth sudden⁶ destruction upon the strong,
so that destruction⁷ cometh⁸ upon the fortress.

¹ Gr. *the one who makes.* ² Gr. *the summit.* ³ Gr. *and he placed.* ⁴ Gr. *that maketh all things and transformeth.* Vg. *Arcturus and Orion.* ⁵ m. *deep darkness.* ⁶ Gr. *that distributeth.* ⁷ Gr. *suffering.* ⁸ All versions, *he bringeth.* m. *causeth.*

7. The English Bible connects this verse with the foregoing context, but it seems to belong logically with the following paragraph. It is possible that some introductory words have been lost from the beginning of the verse. **Wormwood**, as an herb considered poisonous by the ancients, represents the total perversion of justice and right of which the leaders and officials are guilty.

8. Verses 8 and 9 are evidently unrelated to the immediate context and are probably to be credited to some late editor. The words **seek him** are not in the Hebrew, but are supplied by the English versions in order to connect this passage with what precedes it. The purpose of the interpolation is to set forth clearly and strongly the great power of Jehovah whom the Israelites are so heedlessly insulting by their unethical cultus and life; cf. 4: 13; 9: 5, 6. **The Pleiades and Orion** are chosen as two of the most conspicuous and best-known constellations to represent the whole heavens. **Shadow of death** is better translated here and everywhere by **deep darkness**; cf. Ps. 23: 4. This and the following phrase describe the regular unfailling interchange of day and night. **Calleth for the waters of the sea**, etc., this describes the process of evaporation by which the clouds are formed and rain made possible; cf. Job 36: 27.

9. He whose might makes and sustains the order of nature is the one who also **bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong**. Nothing is able to resist his power. **So that destruction cometh** is better read, with all the versions, *so that he bringeth destruction*.

10. They hate him that reproveth in the gate,
and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.¹
11. Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon² the poor,
and take exactions from him of wheat:³
Ye have built houses of hewn stone,
but ye shall not dwell in them;
Ye have planted pleasant vineyards,
but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.
12. For I know how manifold are your transgressions
and how mighty are your sins;
Ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe,
and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their
right.*
13. Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such
a time;
for it is an evil time.⁴

¹ Gr. *abhorred a pure word.* ² Gr. *they buffeted.* Vg. *you plundered.* ³ Gr. *and took choice gifts from them.* ⁴ Gr. *a time of the wicked.*

10. The thought of vs. 7 is here resumed. **Him that reproveth in the gate**, *i.e.* any one, whether an official or a private person, who rebukes the exercise of injustice in the courts, which were held at the gates of the cities; cf. Deut. 22:15; Ruth 4:1 ff.; 1 Kings 22:10.

11. **Take exactions from him of wheat**; the excuse upon which such demands were based is not indicated. Whatever it was, the result was practically a tax levied upon the poor by the rich for the purpose of increasing their own wealth. In return for this tyrannical oppression, the rich are to be deprived of all these things that they hold so dear, by being driven into exile; cf. Zeph. 1:13; Mic. 6:15.

12. This verse enters upon a further specification of the sins of Israel's rich and powerful classes. **Afflict the just**, etc. *i.e.* they condemn the innocent in suits at law, and to this end they receive bribes from the parties interested in the perpetration of such injustice, so that the needy have no chance **in the gate**, *i.e.* in the courts. Justice is for sale to the highest bidder.

13. **Prudent**, probably, means shrewd and cautious. Such an one knows that protest against such conditions is useless and

14. Seek good, and not evil,
that ye may live:
And so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you,
as ye say.
15. Hate the evil, and love¹ the good,
and establish judgement in the gate:
It may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be
gracious
unto the remnant of Joseph.

3. *Bitter Grief awaits the Israelites, 5: 16-17*

16. Therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the
Lord:²

¹ Gr. *Just as you say, We hate the evil and love.* ² Gr. and Syr. omit *the Lord.*

keeps silence, lest speech may get him into disfavor with the influential rich.

14. This is really a threat to the effect that unless they do seek good, destruction awaits them; cf. vs. 4, 15. And so; better that so, *i.e.* if you do. God of hosts shall be with you, as ye say; *i.e.* Israel prides itself on being the people of Jehovah and is certain that Jehovah can and will do nothing but good for his nation; cf. Mic. 3: 11; Jer. 7: 10. But Amos declares that the exercise of the favor of Jehovah toward Israel is conditioned upon the good character and conduct of the nation's leaders. Jehovah is under no obligation to treat Israel generously and kindly, unless the people conform their lives to the high moral standard he has set for them. Shall be is rather *may be*.

15. It may be; the prophet does not feel sure. The sins of Israel may have been so numerous and heinous that no change of heart at this late date can turn aside the punishment due. The remnant of Joseph means the Northern Kingdom as a whole in its present reduced and depleted condition. The long wars with Syria, though now over, had decimated the population and wasted the land, so that even though prosperity was once more enjoyed under Jeroboam, yet as compared with the kingdom of the days of Omri and Ahab Amos looks upon the present population as a mere remnant of the former greatness.

16. In a closing paragraph, Amos for the third time in this

- Wailing shall be in all the broad ways ;
 and they shall say in all the streets, Alas ! alas !
 And they shall call the husbandman to mourning,
 and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.¹
 17. And in all vineyards² shall be wailing :
 for I will pass through the midst of thee, saith the
 LORD.

VII. THE DOOM OF EXILE, 5: 18-27

18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD !
 wherefore would ye have the day of the LORD ?
 it is darkness, and not light.

¹ m. Heb. and proclaim wailing to such as are skilful of lamentation. Vg. and to wailing those who know how to wail. ² Gr. ways.

oracle announces the approaching doom. **Wailing**, *i.e.* for the dead and for the stricken nation. The address closes with the note upon which it began ; cf. 5: 1 f. **The broad ways** are the open spaces near the gates where justice has so often been set at naught. **The husbandman** will be involved as well as the denizen of the city. **The mourning** will be universal, reaching all classes. **Skilful of lamentation** designates professional mourners.

17. **In all vineyards**, *i.e.* where joy is usually at its highest. **Pass through**, even as he had done in Egypt ; cf. Exod. 11: 4. The form of the punishment is left indefinite ; war or pestilence is most probable.

18. **You that desire the day of the Lord** ; there were evidently many who were confident of Jehovah's favor toward Israel and were impatiently longing for the coming of Jehovah's day of punitive wrath upon the nations at large, the enemies of Israel. The result of this day, as they are anticipating, will be the downfall of all the foes of Israel and the political elevation and exaltation of Israel itself. But Amos warns them that **it is darkness, and not light**. They are totally mistaken in their expectations regarding the character of Jehovah's day. Instead of deliverance and glory for Israel, it will bring chastisement and humiliation.

19. As if a man did flee from a lion,
and a bear met him;
Or¹ went into the house and leaned his hand on the
wall,
and a serpent bit him.
20. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not
light?
even very dark, and no brightness in it?
21. I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I will take no delight² in your solemn assem-
blies.
22. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal
offerings,³ I will not accept them:
neither will I regard the peace offerings⁴ of your
fat beasts.
23. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs;
for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

¹ m. and. ² Heb. *will not smell*. Gr. adds *sacrifices*. ³ m. *burnt offerings with your meal offerings*. ⁴ m. *thank offerings*.

19. The punishment that awaits Israel will be inevitable. Any attempt to escape will be simply avoiding Scylla and falling into Charybdis. **Went into the house**, the place of greatest natural security, only to have a **serpent bite him** there; probably, one hidden in a crevice of the wall.

21. No amount of ritualistic ceremonies can appease the wrath of Jehovah. **Feasts** and the like, as they are now conducted, are but an additional aggravation to Jehovah. **Take no delight in**; the literal Hebrew idiom (see above) is a survival from an earlier stage of thought, when the gods were conceived of as actually smelling the odor of the sacrifices; cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:41; 30:38. The Babylonian story of the flood says that "the gods inhaled the sweet savor, the gods gathered like flies around the sacrifice."

23. This is one of the earliest testimonies to the use of instrumental music in the sacred ritual; cf. 2 Sam. 6:5; Is. 30:32; Amos 8:10.

24. But let judgement roll down as waters,
and righteousness as a mighty¹ stream.
25. Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings²
in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
26. Yea, ye have borne³ Siccuth⁴ your king⁵ and Chiun⁶
your images,
the star of your god, which ye made to your-
selves.

¹ m. *everflowing*. ² m. *meal offerings*. ³ m. *shall take up . . . And I will cause*, etc. ⁴ m. *the tabernacle of*; so Gr., Syr., Vg., SV. ⁵ Gr. Syr., and Vg. all take as the name of an idol, either *Molech* or *Milcom*. ⁶ m. *the shrine of*; so SV. Gr. *Raiphan*.

24. **Let judgement roll down as waters**; this is the first requirement of Jehovah, and lacking this, all else is useless. **A mighty stream**; better, *a perennial stream*; i.e. one that does not dry up in the hot season as so many of the winter torrents do.

25. **Did ye bring**, etc.; probably better rendered, *was it sacrifices and offerings that you brought*, etc.? That is, were the success of the Exodus and the care of Jehovah for Israel during the wanderings dependent upon a multiplicity of sacrificial gifts, or rather, was there not something else necessary to please Jehovah, viz. the exercise of justice and right?

26. **Yea, ye have borne**; this is probably better treated as a threat, for the future, viz. *And so you shall carry*, i.e. into exile, the following idolatrous objects; cf. Isa. 46: 1 f. **Siccuth your king and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which**, etc.; perhaps, this should be read, *Saccuth, your king and Kewan, your god, (the star,) your images, which etc.* Saccuth is a title of the Assyrian god Saturn, and Kewan is the regular Assyrian name of the same god. The word star is a marginal note pointing out the character of this god, which has found its way into the text. For the change in the order of words here suggested, cf. the rendering of Gr., viz. "the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan, their images," etc. It seems necessary to conclude that this whole vs. originated after the times of Amos and found its way into his book. Amos elsewhere makes very little of the charge of idolatry, a sin of so serious a nature that he could not have minimized or ignored it, if he had been conscious of its presence in any alarming degree. Furthermore, the worship of Assyrian gods came in first in the later days, after Assyrian influence and control had become dominant in Palestine.

27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus,
saith the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

VIII. THE FATE OF THE CARELESS RICH, 6:1-7

6. Woe to them that are at ease in¹ Zion,
and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria,
The notable men of the chief of the nations
to whom the house of Israel come!²
2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see;
and from thence go ye to Hamath the great:

¹ Gr. and Syr., *who despise*. ² Gr. *they beat down authorities of nations; and entered in themselves*. O *house of Israel, pass, etc.* Syr. *nations, and spoil for themselves the house of Israel*.

27. **Captivity**, in the form of the deportation of whole communities into foreign lands as is here threatened, was first practised by the Assyrians as far as we can discover, having been an original feature of the policy of Tiglath-pileser I (about 1101-1100 B.C.). Amos nowhere distinctly names the Assyrians as the agents of Jehovah's punishment upon Israel; but in the phrase **beyond Damascus** he most probably has them in mind. As a matter of history, the end of the Northern Kingdom and the deportation of its people were brought about by Assyria in the years 734-722 B.C.

1. **At ease in Zion**; the prevailing spirit in both Zion and Samaria, among the rich and powerful, is one of untroubled confidence and security. They are conscious of no shortcomings or offences which should give cause for any alarm regarding the future. Here again Amos shows that, while his message is primarily to the Northern Kingdom, he does not regard the South as blameless, nor as destined to escape punishment. **The notable men of the chief of the nations**; better, with a slight change of text, *note the chief of the nations*, which is continued by, *and enter into them, O house of Israel*, a better interpretation in this context than to **whom the house of Israel come**. With this translation, vs. 1 is naturally continued by vs. 2.

2. **Calneh** is not yet definitely identified; hence nothing is known of the event to which Amos here refers. **Hamath the**

- Then go down to Gath of the Philistines :
 are they better than these kingdoms ?
 or is their border greater than your border ?
3. Ye that put far away ¹ the evil day,
 and cause the seat ² of violence to come near ;

¹ Gr. *Those coming to.* Syr. *Those awaiting.* Vg. *Ye who are separated from.* ² Gr. *the Sabbath.*

great was the capital of Hamath, a state in northern Syria, situated on the Orontes. It was repeatedly engaged in hostilities with Assyria, to which it was almost continuously a vassal. The prophet evidently has in mind some recent disaster that has left Hamath prostrate. **Gath** was the nearest one of the five chief Philistine cities to the border of Israel. According to 2 Chron. 26:6, it was destroyed by Uzziah of Judah about 760 B.C. **Are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border?** This is the only possible rendering of the present Hebrew text. The natural interpretation is to the effect that Israel has no cause for complaint, since her success and power are at least equal to that of her most influential neighbors. The questions might conceivably call for an affirmative answer, thus yielding the sense that Calneh and the other capitals were indeed larger and stronger than Israel and Judah, and yet they have fallen; let Israel and Judah take warning. But this is forcing the language. It is better to change the text slightly and render, *Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is your border greater than their border?* This yields the required sense that Israel is small among the nations and has no warrant for counting upon immunity from the fate that has overtaken her stronger neighbors.

3. **Ye that put far away the evil day;** some were longing for the coming of the day of Jehovah, in the conviction that it could bring nothing but good to Israel (5:18); there were others who granted the possibility or probability that it would be a day of disaster for Israel, but with a shallow and selfish optimism they persuaded themselves easily that there was no likelihood of its immediate or speedy coming (cf. Isa. 5:19); it might descend upon future generations; but why concern oneself about such far-off and hypothetical troubles? There is enough to keep any man busy looking after his interests at the present day. **And cause the seat of violence to come near,** *i.e.* they encourage the exercise of oppression, instead of banishing it from their presence.

4. That lie upon beds of ivory,
and stretch themselves upon their couches,
And eat the lambs out of the flock,
and the calves out of the midst of the stall;
5. That sing idle songs to the sound of the viol;
that devise for themselves instruments of music,
like David;¹
6. That drink wine in bowls,²
and anoint themselves with the chief oils;
but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first
that go captive,
and the revelry of them that stretched themselves
shall pass away.

¹ m. like David's.² m. in bowls of wine.

4. **Beds of ivory**, *i.e.* inlaid with ivory. Sennacherib carried away such couches from Judah as valuable plunder in the days of Hezekiah. **Calves out of the midst of the stall**; *i.e.* especially fed and fattened.

5. **Sing idle songs**; better, improvise silly songs, a caustic characterization of their efforts in music. **Devise for themselves instruments of music, like David**; not satisfied with existing means of musical expression, they invent new ones. While the masses toil and suffer, these indifferent rich waste time upon foolish trifles. This is one of the earliest statements testifying to the belief that David was possessed of great musical skill.

6. **Drink wine in bowls**; the use of wine is forbidden by Mohammed and has always been placed under the ban by the Bedouin. To Amos, the champion of the poor and the exponent of the simple life, such reckless indulgence was criminal. **But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph**; occupied fully with their revelry and debauch, they have no time nor inclination to realize the stricken state of their country, the destruction of which is inevitable.

7. Those who have been the leaders in the sins of the day will be the first to go into captivity. They have led the way in the introduction and adoption of foreign customs in religious and social life; they shall lead the way into exile among the foreigners

IX. THE DESOLATION OF SAMARIA, 6:8-14

8. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself,
saith the LORD, the God of hosts:
I abhor the excellency¹ of Jacob,
and hate his palaces:
therefore will I deliver up² the city with all that is
therein.
9. And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men
10. in one house, that they shall die.³ And when a
man's uncle⁴ shall take him up, even he that burn-
eth him⁵ to bring out the bones out of the house,
and shall say unto him that is in the innermost parts
of⁶ the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he

¹ m. *pride*. ² Gr. *I will lift up*. ³ Gr. adds *and the rest will be left behind*.
⁴ m. *kinsman*. Gr. *And their neighbours will take*. ⁵ Gr. *and will treat with unlawful violence*. Syr. *or he who is to bury him*. ⁶ Gr. and Syr. omit *the innermost parts of*.

whom they have so foolishly aped. **And the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away**; better, *and the pro-
cession of the dissolute shall depart*.

8. **By himself**; only elsewhere in Jer. 51:14; cf. Gen. 22:16; Numb. 14:28; Amos 4:2; Hebr. 6:13. **Excellency**; better, *glory or pride*; *i.e.* the things of which Israel is proud. **The city is**, of course, Samaria. It is to be abandoned by Jehovah to the enemy.

9-10. These verses are almost certainly a later addition, expanding the description of the destruction of Samaria by the contribution of some concrete detail. The late origin is shown by the lack of both poetic form and poetic tone and by the fact that the narrative furnishes a smooth connection when these verses are removed. They describe the destruction wrought by a plague, whereas the context deals with a storming of the city by besiegers. **Ten men in one house** would be an unusually large number for the average house, and these ten are but a remnant of a larger household. The conditions are applicable only to the palaces of the rich. But even this handful of survivors **shall die**, all at least save one (vs. 10). **A man's uncle**; Hebrew, *his uncle*, *i.e.* the survivor's uncle. **Even he that burneth him**; Hebrew, *and his burner*; *i.e.* the one that burns the spices and incense at

shall say, No; then shall he say, Hold thy peace; for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

11. For, behold, the LORD commandeth,
And the great house shall be smitten¹ with breaches,
and the little house with clefts.
12. Shall horses run upon the rock?
will one plow *there* with oxen?²
That ye have turned judgement into gall,
and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood:
13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought,

¹ m. he will smite the great house.

² Gr. or will they be silent among females?

the burial; cf. Jer. 34:5; 2 Chron. 16:14; 21:19. In the innermost parts of the house; the sole survivor of the pestilence is crouching in terror, hidden away in some remote corner of the house, expecting his own end every hour. Then shall he say, Hold thy peace! The utterance of him who has gone to bury the dead. He is terrified into silence by the scene. For we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. This is better rendered *for one must not*, etc., and regarded as the statement of the narrator of the scene, rather than as belonging either to the survivor or the "burner." This represents them both as overwhelmed by superstitious terror, afraid even to mention Jehovah's name, lest he should strike them dead. In Hebrew thought, the name and the personality were closely allied, the name being conceived of as actually a manifestation or part of the personality. Hence the name was gifted with extraordinary power and must not be spoken carelessly. Indeed, in late Hebrew usage it was unlawful to pronounce the name of Jehovah at all.

11. The great house and the little house include all the dwellings of the city, both of the rich and of the poor. The city will be razed to the ground.

12. Shall, or *can*, horses run upon the rock? This is an unnatural and well-nigh impossible thing. Will one plow there with oxen? The word *there* is not in the Hebrew, and, in its absence, the Hebrew yields no suitable meaning. It is better, by a slightly different reading, to render, *can one plow the sea with oxen?* This is another unnatural and impossible thing. In just such abnormal fashion ye have turned judgement into gall, etc.; cf. Deut. 29:18.

13. Rejoice in a thing of nought; they deceive themselves,

- which say, Have we not taken
to us horns by our own strength?
14. For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation,
O house of Israel, saith the LORD, the God of hosts;
And they shall afflict you from the entering in of
Hamath
unto the brook of the Arabah.

X. VISIONS OF APPROACHING JUDGMENT, 7: 1-9

I. *Devouring Locusts*, 7: 1-3

7. Thus the Lord GOD shewed me: and, behold, he
formed¹ locusts

¹ Gr., Syr., Tg. a brood.

supposing to be something worth while that which is after all nothing. **Taken to us horns**; *i.e.* gotten power, the horn being a symbol of strength; cf. Jer. 48: 25; Deut. 33: 17; Ps. 75: 5, 10. They boast as though the prosperity of the reign of Jeroboam II were all due to themselves, whereas they could do nothing apart from Jehovah.

14. The chastisement for all this wilful sin and self-deception is now declared. **A nation**; though not named, the agent of Yahweh's wrath whom Amos had in mind was probably Assyria; cf. 5: 27. **The entering in of Hamath** was the pass through the Lebanons, at the southern entrance of which Dan was located; cf. 2 Kings 14: 25; Numb. 24: 8. It marks the extreme north of Israel's territory. **The brook of the Arabah**, which evidently indicates the extreme southern limit, is not definitely known. If the threat applies only to Northern Israel, this must have been a stream flowing into the northern end of the Dead Sea. But if Judah is included in the disaster (cf. vs. 1), it was probably the Wady-el-Hasy, which flows into the southern end of the Dead Sea and separates Moab from Edom, or the Wady-el-Arish, known as "the brook of Egypt"; cf. Numb. 34: 5.

1. It is not improbable that these visions belong to the beginning of Amos's ministry, having held the same place in his experience as the inaugural visions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets had held in theirs.

1. **Formed**; better, *was forming*. It was the latter growth

In the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; And, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.¹

2. And it came to pass that when they made an end of eating the grass of the land,
Then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand?² for he is small.
3. The LORD repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.³

2. *A Devastating Drought, 7:4-6*

4. Thus the Lord GOD shewed me: and, behold, the Lord GOD⁴ called to contend by fire;⁵

¹ Gr. *there was a locust, one Gog the king.* ² Gr., Syr., Vg. *who will raise up Jacob?*
³ Syr. omits *saith the Lord.* ⁴ Gr. omits. ⁵ Gr. *called the judgement in fire.*

after the king's mowings; this is probably a note added later for the purpose of fixing the precise time of the appearance of the locusts. It does not aid us much, however; for we know nothing of the time of the king's mowings. But apparently the locusts were so timed as to appear when the rains were all past and the new grass was just springing up. Thus their destructive work would completely ruin the crops.

2. **They made an end of eating;** better, by a slight change of text, *when they were making an end*, etc. The sympathies of Amos were aroused and he interceded with Jehovah to put a stop to the destruction of Israel before it was too late. **For he is small;** the very weakness and insignificance of Israel seem to Amos to furnish sufficient basis for an appeal to the clemency of Jehovah.

3. **The Lord repented,** *i.e.* relented or changed his purpose. For other cases of the same anthropomorphic point of view, cf. 1 Sam. 15:35; Jon. 3:9; Gen. 6:7; Joel 2:14. **Saith the Lord;** better, *said the Lord.*

In this vision, Amos probably describes the punishment of Israel as he had first conceived of it. But the punishment had been withheld and, as time passed, he came to see that more stringent measures must be taken by Jehovah.

4. **Called to contend;** for similar representations, compare

And it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land.

5. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small.
6. The LORD repented concerning this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.¹

3. *The Plumblineline of Destruction, 7: 7-9*

7. Thus he² shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside³ a wall made by a plumblineline,⁴ with a plumblineline in his hand.
8. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumblineline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumblineline in the midst of my people Israel;

¹ Syr. omits *saith, etc.*, as in vs. 3. ² Gr., Vg. *the Lord*. ³ Or, *upon*. ⁴ Gr., Syr. *a wall of adamant*.

Isa. 3: 13 f.; Hos. 4: 1; Mic. 6: 2, and the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18: 19 ff.). Those called to the contest are, perhaps, the worshippers of other gods than Jehovah within Israel. As Jehovah had settled the question of his supremacy by fire in Elijah's day, so now he proposes the same test once more. But the **fire** here is the scorching heat of the sun, which kills all vegetation. **The great deep** denotes the "waters underneath the earth" (Exod. 20: 4), whence all the springs and wells were thought of as being supplied, cf. Gen. 7: 11; Deut. 33: 13; Ps. 24: 2. All the streams and springs were dried up and it seemed as though the very **land** itself were burning up, when Amos once again interceded with success.

7. **Made by a plumblineline** is probably a phrase due to error in the transmission of the text. If correct, it means that the wall had once been in plumb; but the whole vision implies that it was now out of plumb and was therefore doomed to be torn down. The plumblineline serves simply to show the wall's variation from the perpendicular; it is not itself an instrument of destruction; cf. Isa. 34: 11; 2 Kings 21: 13.

8. **I will set a plumblineline, i.e.,** make a test of their moral and spiritual condition and make it manifest to everybody. **Pass by**

I will not again pass by them any more :

9. And the high places of Isaac¹ shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries² of Israel shall be laid waste ;
And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

XI. AMOS CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY, 7:10-17

10. Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the

¹ Gr., Syr. of laughter.

² Gr. the festivals.

them, *i.e.* forgive them ; cf. Mic. 7:18 ; Prov. 19:11. Jehovah, who had yielded to the intercession of Amos in the two preceding visions, now forestalls any plea on his part by declaring his decision to punish to be irrevocable.

9. **The high places of Isaac** and **the sanctuaries of Israel** are especially denounced, not because they were thought of as illegal shrines, for the worship at these local sanctuaries was not prohibited by law until the adoption of the Deuteronomic Code in the days of Josiah ; but because of the unspiritual and immoral character of the worship itself. As Amos clearly points out again and again, the Israelites had no true conception of the character of Jehovah and of the requirements for pleasing him. The worship at these shrines was conducted for the purpose of pleasing Jehovah and thus guaranteeing prosperity to the worshippers ; the destruction of the shrines was the most convincing evidence that the worship was useless. **I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword** ; Amos evidently expected the blow to fall speedily. As a matter of fact, Jeroboam's son Zechariah was the last of the dynasty, having been slain by the usurper, Shallum. But the "sword" expected by Amos was almost certainly the army of Assyria, and this did not molest Israel until the reign of Menahem (2 Kings 15:19), while actual war did not come till the time of Pekah (2 Kings 15:29), when Tiglath-pileser carried captive a large part of the population.

10. **The priest of Beth-el** ; evidently not the only priest at this great shrine, but the chief priest. This shrine with its priesthood was under the special patronage of the king (vs. 13) ; hence Amaziah was especially sensitive to attacks upon the king and

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11. land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.
12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat
13. bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again
-

felt a responsibility to keep the king informed regarding all such matters. **Amos hath conspired**; there was no other possible interpretation of such words as those spoken by Amos in vs. 9 for one like Amaziah, whose interests were almost wholly identical with those of Jeroboam. The throne of the Northern Kingdom was only too often the aim of conspirators; it had arisen indeed in conspiracy (1 Kings 12) and had already seen three changes of dynasty due to the same cause (1 Kings 15:27; 16:9, 16; 2 Kings 9), while the reigning dynasty in turn was to end by the same method in the days of Jeroboam's son (2 Kings 15:10). Hence the priest, lacking Amos's profound insight and high conception of personal character, naturally looked upon his words as intended to foment discontent and revolt. **The land is not able to bear**, *i.e.* such talk must be stopped lest it create a state of public unrest and dissatisfaction that may bring disaster to the throne.

11. This is as fair a report of Amos's message as could be expected of an opponent; cf. vs. 9; 5:27. Its only lack is that it fails to mention the causes assigned by Amos for the disaster he foretells. The effect of the message upon Jeroboam is not recorded. The following suggestion to Amos may have been due to word received from the king, or to Amaziah's desire to give Amos warning that he might flee from the wrath to come, or to a hope of thereby avoiding troublesome complications, the prophet being too sacred and perhaps too popular a personality to be attacked by the king with impunity.

12. **Seer**; a term of reproach in Amaziah's mouth, meaning impracticable dreamer. **There eat bread, and prophesy there**; the point of this sneer is its implication that Amos is but one of the common herd of prophets who prophesy for the money they can make thereby. Amaziah therefore suggests to him that he has brought his wares to the wrong market. Let him take that kind of prophecy to Judah; it will be popular there and bring large returns, for the Southerners will rejoice in predictions of disaster to the North.

13. **It is the king's sanctuary, and a royal house**, *i.e.* it is no

- any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's sanctuary,
 14. and it is a royal house. Then answered Amos, and
 said to Amaziah, I was¹ no prophet, neither was¹ I
 a prophet's son;² but I was¹ an herdman, and a
 dresser of sycomore trees: and the LORD took me
 15. from following the flock, and the LORD said unto me,
 Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore
 hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Pro-
 16. phesy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word*³
 against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith the
 17. LORD: Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and
 thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword,

¹ m. *am.* ² m. *one of the sons of the prophets*; see 1 Kings 20: 35. ³ Gr. *Thou shalt not stir up a mob.*

place to be talking against the king. It was the religious headquarters of the nation and the seat of a royal residence. The capital proper was, of course, at Samaria.

14. Amos repudiates the charge that he is a professional prophet who uses his office for the purpose of gain to himself. He does not belong to the "sons of the prophets," *i.e.* the professional prophetic guilds. **I was** (or, *am*) **a herdman**; in 1: 1, Amos is classed with the shepherds, and here the word "herdman" should either be changed to "shepherd" or else interpreted so as to mean "herder of sheep," rather than "cowherd." **A dresser of sycomore trees**; this tree still grows in Palestine and Egypt; its fruit grows in grapelike clusters and is somewhat like a small fig in size, but is very insipid and woody. As a cultivator of such trees and a shepherd, Amos must have been of rather low financial standing in his community.

15. The consciousness of his divine call to prophesy came while he was in pursuit of his regular occupations. Amos felt, not that he had chosen prophecy as his profession, but that, wholly apart from any volition of his own, he had become a prophet by the divine compulsion.

16. **Thou sayest**; Amos may have meant to set the word of Amaziah in contrast with the word of Jehovah. **Drop not thy word**, *i.e.*, preach not.

17. **Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city**; *i.e.* she will be publicly ravished by the victorious soldiers of the invading army.

and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

XII. A VISION OF ISRAEL'S END, 8:1-3

8. Thus the Lord God shewed me: and behold, a basket of summer fruit.¹
2. And he said,² Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit.
- Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.
3. And the songs³ of the temple⁴ shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God:

¹ Gr. a basket of the bird-catcher.
compartments.

² Syr. And Jehovah said unto me.

³ Gr. the

⁴ m. palace.

Divided by line; *i.e.* distributed in portions among the colonists imported by the conqueror; cf. Mic. 2:4; Jer. 6:12; 2 Kings 17:24. **A land that is unclean**; *i.e.* a land under the sway of other gods than Jehovah; cf. 1 Sam. 26:19. **Be led away captive**; undaunted by Amaziah's opposition, Amos reiterates the threats to which the priest had taken such serious exception. This was his great burden; he could not rest quietly beneath it. He must relieve his laden soul by expression.

8:1. Strange as it seems to us, the whole point of this vision lies in the pun upon the word for **summer fruit** (*viz. qayits*). Its sound suggested the similarly sounding word for **end** (*viz. qêls*). Thus there is brought out once more exactly the same message as that expressed in the third vision. Punning, or paronomasia, was a favorite exercise with the prophets and was employed to add emphasis and vividness to some of their most striking utterances, cf. Mic. 1:10 ff.; Jer. 1:11 f.; 50:20, 34; Hos. 1:5; Ezek. 25:16. There is no especial significance in the choice of summer fruit for the symbol of destruction. Any other word that would have furnished the desired play upon words would have done just as well.

3. **And the songs of the temple, etc.**; better, with a slight change of text, *and the singing-women of the palace shall wail.*

The dead bodies shall be many; in every place shall they cast them forth with silence.¹

XIII. THE SINS OF ISRAEL AND THEIR PENALTY, 8:4-14

4. Hear this, O ye that would swallow up² the needy³ and cause the poor of the land to fail,⁴
5. Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn?⁵
and the sabbath, that we may set forth⁶ wheat?⁷
Making the ephah small, and the shekel great,
and dealing falsely with balances of deceit;
6. That we may buy the poor for silver,

¹ m. have they cast them forth: be silent! Gr. I will cast them forth to silence.
² Gr. that destroy into the dawn. Syr. that despise. ³ Syr. omits. ⁴ Gr. that oppress the poor of the land. Syr. omits cause to fail. ⁵ Vg. hire. Gr. omits corn. ⁶ m. Heb. open. ⁷ Gr. and Syr., treasure.

Their joy and mirth will be turned into terror and lamentation. There will be a mass of carcasses, a slaughter without regard to rank or sex. In every place; burial will go by default. The carcasses will be left upon the face of the ground to be mauled and devoured by birds and beasts of prey. This was the most awful calamity conceivable in the ancient world. With silence; better, *Hush!* The horror of the situation will be so overwhelming that speech will seem sacrilege; cf. 6:10.

4. Swallow up; better, with slightly different vowels, *trample upon*. Those addressed are evidently the greedy and all-powerful rich.

5. In their lust for gain, they shrink not from the violation of any law or custom. New moon and sabbath both evidently required cessation from work and business; cf. 1 Sam. 20:5-34; 2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13; Hos. 2:11. Various methods of cheating are listed. In selling grain they gave small measure, or manipulated the scales so as to take more weight in money than they were entitled to. The ephah has been variously estimated at from 21¼ to 40¾ quarts. The shekel likewise is of uncertain value, but is usually reckoned at about \$10.80 if of gold, and at 60 cents if of silver.

6. The first two phrases are found in essence in 2:6. And

- and the needy for a pair of shoes,
and sell the refuse¹ of the wheat.²
7. The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob,
Surely I will never forget any of their works.³
8. Shall not the land tremble for this,
and every one mourn that dwelleth therein?
Yea, it shall rise up wholly⁴ like the River;
and it shall be troubled and sink again,⁵ like the
River of Egypt.
9. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord
GOD,
That I will cause the sun to go down⁶ at noon,
and I will darken the earth⁷ in the clear day.
10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning,
and all your songs into lamentation;

¹ Gr. from all. ² Gr. the race. ³ Gr. their works will be forgotten unto the victory.
⁴ Gr. and Syr., ruin. ⁵ Gr. it shall subside. ⁶ Gr. The sun will go down. ⁷ Gr. and
the earth will become dark.

sell the refuse of the wheat; not satisfied with giving small measure and cheating the buyer in the weight of his money, they add to their sins by forcing upon him grain of the poorest quality.

7. **The excellency of Jacob**, or *glory of Jacob*. This oath is sworn either by Jehovah himself who is Israel's glory (cf. 6: 8; 1 Sam. 15: 29), or by the vainglorious pride of Israel which is unchanging (cf. Hos. 5: 5; 7: 10). **I will never forget**; cf. 8: 2; 7: 8. **Any of their works**; or, *all their works*, i.e. their evil deeds.

8. **Tremble**; i.e. as in an earthquake. **This**; i.e. for the wickedness of Israel. **Like the River**; i.e. like the Nile; cf. 9: 5. The annual rise of the Nile with its corresponding subsidence is in the prophet's mind.

9. **In that day**, viz. the great and terrible day of Jehovah. **At noon**, viz. in an eclipse. An eclipse had actually occurred on June 15, 763 B.C., which astronomers describe as having been visible at Jerusalem as a fairly large partial eclipse. Such phenomena were for the mass of the people in Amos's time inexplicable except as miraculous portents, betokening the divine wrath.

10. **Sackcloth**; the garb of mourners; Isa. 15: 3; 22: 12. **Baldness**; an artificially produced baldness, which was another

- And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins,
and baldness upon every head;
And I will make it as the mourning for an only son,¹
and the end thereof² as a bitter day.
11. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD,
that I will send a famine in the land,
Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words³ of the LORD.
12. And they shall wander⁴ from sea to sea,⁵
and from the north even to the east;
They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the
LORD,
and shall not find it.
13. In that day shall the fair virgins
and the young men faint for thirst.
14. They that swear by the sin⁶ of Samaria,

¹ Gr. *a beloved one*. ² Gr. *and those with him*. ³ Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. *the word*.
⁴ Syr. *and they shall assemble*. ⁵ Gr. *and the waters of the sea shall roll*. ⁶ Gr. *ac-*
ording to the propitiation. Syr. *by the idols*.

evidence of mourning; cf. Deut. 14:1; Isa. 3:24; 22:12; Mic. 1:16. Mourning for an only son; the most intense of all sorrows; cf. Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10. The end thereof; viz. of the mourning. As a bitter day; *i.e.* without hope.

11. In their dire distress and despair, the people will turn to Jehovah for aid, but he will give them no recognition. Cf. Mic. 3:6.

12. From sea to sea, viz. from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean; or perhaps, from one end of the earth to the other. From the North even to the East; *i.e.* no portion of the earth will be left unvisited in the effort of the people to find God.

13. The fair virgins and the young men, viz. the very flower of the land. For thirst; not for water, but for Jehovah; cf. vs. 11; Ps. 42:1, 2.

14. Swear by; *i.e.* worship; cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 48:1; Jer. 12:16. The sin of Samaria; viz. (if the translation be correct), the calves made by Jeroboam I for Northern Israel's worship. But, in view of the parallel references to the worship of special gods at Dan and Beersheba, it is probably

and say, As thy God, O Dan, liveth ;
and, As the way¹ of Beer-sheba liveth ;
Even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

XIV. A FINAL VISION OF INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION,

9 : 1-4

9. I saw the Lord standing² beside the altar : and he said,
Smite the capitals,³
that the thresholds may shake :
And break them in pieces⁴ on the head of all of them ;
and I will slay the last of them with the sword :
There shall not one of them flee away,
and there shall not one of them escape.⁵

¹ m. manner. Gr. thy God. ² m. upon. ³ Gr. upon the mercy-seat. ⁴ Gr. and cut through. Vg. avarice. ⁵ m. he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

better to translate here, *Ashimath of Samaria*, the reference being to the goddess of that name. Mention is made in the Elephantine Papyri, recently discovered, of a corresponding male deity, viz. Asham, of Bethel. **Thy God, O Dan**; the contemporaries of Amos, while recognizing Jehovah as the nation's only God, believed in the existence of other gods, and sought the aid of various local and family gods in the many crises of their daily lives; cf. Isa. 2:8; Hos. 5:12; 13:4; Jer. 2:28. **The way of Beer-sheba**; if this rendering be correct, it means the manner of worship at Beersheba, or the festal pilgrimages thither. But we should expect rather the name of the God especially worshipped at Beersheba and the word "way" is probably due to a deliberate change from that name, which would naturally be odious in the sight of all later worshippers of Jehovah. **Never rise up again**; cf. 5:2.

1. **The altar**; viz. at Bethel, or some other great sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom. **And he said**, viz. to one of his agents; cf. 2 Sam. 24:16. **The capitals**, i.e. the tops of the columns upon which the roof of the sanctuary was supported. **The thresholds**; the building is to be shaken and shattered from roof to foundation. **And break them in pieces on the head of all of them**; i.e. smash the capitals or pillars over the heads of

2. Though they dig ¹ into hell,²
 thence shall my hand take them ;
 And though they climb up to heaven,
 thence will I bring them down.
3. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel,
 I will search and take them out thence ;
 And though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea,
 thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.
4. And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
 thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them :
 And I will set mine eyes upon them for evil,
 and not for good.

¹ Gr. *hide away*.

² m. Heb. *Sheol*.

all the worshippers. **The last of them** ; if any of them escape destruction in the collapse of the shrine, it will but be to perish by the sword. Not a single soul will escape.

2. **Hell** ; better with m. *Sheol*, the abode of all departed spirits. It was located in the depths of the earth and so was the most inaccessible spot conceivable in that direction. **Heaven**, *i.e.* the highest conceivable point.

3. **The top of Carmel** ; 1800 feet above sea level, covered with dense woods and honeycombed by a labyrinth of caves, over 2000 in number ; hence an ideal hiding-place for fugitives. **The serpent**, *viz.* the sea dragon supposed by ancient peoples to have its home at the bottom of the sea ; cf. Isa. 27 : 1.

4. **Go into captivity** ; even here, where other gods were supposed to be all-powerful, Jehovah will manifest his supreme power in bringing death upon them. **Mine eyes upon them for evil** ; there can be no eluding the all-seeing eye of Jehovah, which henceforth will single them out for punishment, instead of for blessing.

 XV. A EULOGY UPON JEHOVAH'S POWER, 9:5-6

5. For the Lord, the GOD of hosts, *is* he that toucheth the land and it melteth,¹
 and all that dwell therein shall mourn;
 And it shall rise up wholly² like the River;
 and shall sink again, like the River of Egypt;
6. *It is* he that buildeth his chambers in the heaven,
 and hath founded his vault³ upon the earth;
 He that calleth for the waters of the sea
 and poureth them out upon the face of the earth;
 The LORD⁴ is his name.

 XVI. ISRAEL MAY EXPECT NO SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FROM
 JEHOVAH, 9:7-10

7. Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me,
 O children of Israel? saith the LORD.

¹ Gr. and maketh it shake. ² Gr. its ruin shall rise up. ³ Gr. his command. Syr. his promise. ⁴ Gr., Syr. the Lord of Hosts.

9:5-6. This section is quite generally recognized as coming from the pen of some later writer, whose mind turned to thoughts of Jehovah's mighty power as he read the words of Amos and looked back upon the course of history and realized what Jehovah had wrought in fulfilment of the prophet's threatenings. The considerations in support of late origin are the same as in the case of the similar passages 4:13 and 5:8-9.

5. **It melteth**; a reference to volcanic or seismic disturbances; cf. Mic. 1:4. **Rise up, etc.**; almost a word for word repetition of the latter part of 8:8.

6. **Chambers in the heaven**; *i.e.* the storehouses in which Jehovah was thought of as keeping the rain, snow, wind and hail; cf. Ps. 135:7; 147:16 f. **His vault**, *i.e.* the arching firmament which overhangs the earth, the edges of which were supposed to rest upon the earth; cf. 26:11. **Calleth for the waters, etc.**; a repetition of the latter part of 5:8.

7. This was a most astonishing statement in the ears of Amos's listeners. Their whole religious life was based upon the

Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of
Egypt,
and the Philistines from Caphtor,¹ and the Syrians
from Kir?²

8. Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful
kingdom,
and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth;
Saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of
Jacob, saith the LORD.

¹ Gr., Syr., Tg., Vg. *Cappadocia*.

² Gr. *a pil.* Vg. *Cyrene*.

proposition that Israel was Jehovah's chosen people. The **Ethiopians** were a far-removed people, who had by this time conquered upper Egypt, including Thebes. They were doubtless despised by Israel as black and barbarous; and yet the prophet puts them upon the same level before Jehovah with Israel herself. The deliverance of Israel from **Egypt** had always been used as convincing proof of Jehovah's power and of his love for Israel. Yet Amos dares to say that Jehovah has done just as much for the **Philistines** and the **Syrians**, both of them long hated by Israel as most persistent foes. **Caphtor** is best identified with Crete, whence the Philistines emigrated to the south. The recent discovery of the so-called Phæstos Disc in Crete makes this origin of the Philistines practically certain. **Kir** is mentioned in 1:5 as the place whither the Syrians will be carried captive when Jehovah's wrath alights upon them. Nothing is known concerning its location.

8. **Eyes of the Lord God are upon;** as in 9:4. **The sinful kingdom;** viz. Northern Israel. **From off the face of the earth;** no stronger statement of final and total destruction could be made. **Saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob;** this is exactly the contrary of what has just been said. It, with the following two verses, is from the pen of a later writer who sought to make the words of Amos accord precisely and literally with the events of history as they were now known. **The house of Jacob** probably denotes Northern Israel; cf. 5:1, 4, 6; 6:8, 14; 7:2, 5, 10, 16; 8:7. But since a different writer speaks here, it may be that the phrase is not used in the same sense as it had with Amos and that it denotes Israel, as a whole, both north and south.

9. For, lo, I will command,
 and I will sift¹ the house of Israel among all the
 nations,
 Like as *grain* is sifted in a sieve,
 yet shall not the least grain² fall upon the earth.
10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,
 who say,
 The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

XVI. A PICTURE OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE, 9:11-15

11. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David
 that is fallen,

¹ m. Heb. *cause to move to and fro.*

² Gr. *ruin.*

9. Sift the house of Israel among all the nations, *i.e.* send the Israelites into exile. Yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth; *i.e.* the experience of exile will eliminate all the worthless in Israel, but the truly pious will be protected and preserved. This writer describes, not destruction as Amos had done, but purification through chastisement resulting in the preservation of all the good.

10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword; this is the point of view of later times, when the sufferings of the righteous had become a source of serious perplexity to the pious. Looking back upon the exile of Northern Israel, this writer accounts for the death of all who perished by reason of that event on the ground that they were sinners who deserved to die and did die in order that the just Jehovah might be able to shower blessings upon the pious remainder. **Evil shall not overtake nor prevent us**; the same point of view on the part of the wicked is expressed in 6:3 and Mic. 3:11. It arose from the belief that Jehovah was bound to defend his own people from disaster at the hands of enemies, and that as the most powerful of all gods he was abundantly able to do so. The thought that the justice of Jehovah could lead him to doom his own chosen people to destruction was incredible to the masses. **Prevent** here has the meaning "go before" or "anticipate," as in the petition of the prayer-book, "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings by thy most gracious favor, etc."

And close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up
his ruins,

and I will build it as in the days of old;¹

12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom,² and all
the nations,

which are³ called by my name, saith the LORD that
doeth this.

13. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,

¹ Syr. adds, *as the years of generation after generation.*
men may seek out me.

² Gr. *that the remnant of*

³ m. *were.*

9:11-15. This section is the work of a later writer. The chief considerations in support of this view are as follows. Amos elsewhere predicts destruction; here restoration and blessing are announced, and that too, without any ethical prerequisites on Israel's part. Amos's whole message emphasized the ethical and spiritual; this concerns itself wholly with the material side of life. Amos thinks of Jehovah as God of the universe; never elsewhere as "thy God" (vs. 15). This passage seems to look back upon the Exile as an accomplished fact (vs. 11, 14 f.). The attitude toward Edom is one characteristic of exilic and post-exilic days. These are the words of a prophet of later days who realized the necessity of bringing faith and hope back to the discouraged post-exilic community.

11. **In that day**, viz. the day of Jehovah. **The tabernacle of David that is fallen**, i.e. the dynasty and kingdom of Judah, which are now overthrown and held in subjection by a foreign foe. **As in the days of old**, viz. the pre-exilic age as a whole or the days of David in particular.

12. **Possess the remnant of Edom**; cf. Obad., Isa. 63: 1-6, and other exilic and later writings for the same attitude of hostility toward Edom in particular. **And all the nations**; and yet Amos had declared that Israel had no advantage over other peoples in Jehovah's eyes; cf. 9: 7. This writer looks for the supremacy of Israel over all the surrounding peoples. **Which are called by my name**, i.e. those which in the days of Israel's greatest glory had been subject to her power; the Davidic sway is to be restored as at the first. To "call a name over" anything was to assert ownership of it; cf. Jer. 7: 10; Deut. 28: 10; 2 Sam. 12: 28.

13. **The plowman shall overtake the reaper**, etc., i.e. the seasons will be so favorable that the crops will mature with mar-

- That the plowman shall overtake the reaper,¹
 and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;²
 And the mountains shall drop sweet wine,
 and all the hills shall melt.³
14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people
 Israel,
 and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit
 them;
 And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine
 thereof;
 they shall also make gardens, and eat of the fruit of
 them.
15. And I will plant them upon their land,
 and they shall no more be plucked up out of their
 land
 Which I have given them,
 saith the LORD thy God.

¹ Gr. *that the harvest will overtake the vintage.* ² Gr. *and the cluster of grapes shall turn dark in the seedtime.* ³ Gr. *will be planted together.* Vg. *will be cultivated.*

vellous rapidity and will crowd one upon the other almost faster than the farmer can take care of them. The vintage ordinarily begins in September and seedtime just as soon as the ground has been softened by the October rains. **The mountains shall drop sweet wine**; the mountain sides were commonly clothed with vineyards; cf. Joel 3: 18. **The hills shall melt**, *i.e.* seem to be dissolved in the flow of wine from the vineyards.

14. **Bring again the captivity**, *i.e.* restore the exiles to their own land. **Build the waste cities**, etc.; external and material power and possessions occupy all of this writer's attention. Amos could not have left a promise of the reign of justice and righteousness out of his picture of the future. **Plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof**, etc.; a promise of permanent habitation and possession, which is stated even more explicitly in vs. 15. There will be no more captivity or exile.

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF
HOSEA

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I. THE BOOK OF HOSEA

I. CONTENTS

THE Book of Hosea resolves itself naturally into two main divisions, viz. chaps 1-3 and 4-14. The former section is permeated throughout by allusions to and interpretations of Hosea's own personal and family experiences. This element disappears in the latter chapters, which contain sermons setting forth repeatedly the guilt of Israel and her impending doom.

The first division may be further divided into five sections, viz.:

- I. The Superscription to the Book (1: 1);
 - II. The Unhappy Marriage of Hosea (1: 2-9);
 - III. A Promise of Israel's Restoration to Jehovah's Favor (1: 10-2: 1);
 - IV. Israel's Sin, Punishment, Repentance, and Restoration (2: 2-23);
 - V. Hosea's Purchase and Discipline of a Wife (3: 1-5).
- The second division includes fifteen sections, viz.:
- VI. Jehovah's Quarrel with Israel (4: 1-19);
 - VII. Jehovah's Judgment upon Israel (5: 1-14);
 - VIII. Israel's Facile Repentance and Indelible Guilt (5: 15-6: 11);
 - IX. The Deep-seated Corruption of Israel (7: 1-7);
 - X. Israel's Disloyalty to Jehovah (7: 8-16);
 - XI. Israel's Rulers, Gods, and Policies are Hostile to Jehovah (8: 1-14);

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XII. Israel deserting Jehovah and deserted by Jehovah (9: 1-17);

XIII. The Destruction of Israel's Altars and Idols (10: 1-8);

XIV. The Long-standing and Deep-rooted Sin of Israel and its Inevitable Outcome (10: 9-15);

XV. Jehovah's Love for Israel (11: 1-11);

XVI. The Unpardonable Deceit of Israel (11: 12-12: 14);

XVII. How are the Mighty Fallen (13: 1-16);

XVIII. A Call to Repentance (14: 1-3);

XIX. Pardon and Promise (14: 4-8);

XX. A Word to the Wise (14: 9).

In neither division of the book is there discernible any logical or chronological relationship among its constituent sections. The sections in themselves reveal considerable logical arrangement; but there is no steady progress from section to section. They are merely arranged side by side like pearls upon a string; there is no vital connection binding each to its predecessor. This is more or less true of all of the prophetic books; but there is less of logic in Hosea than in any other of the prophets.

2. UNITY

In a book so loosely tied together as Hosea, the temptation is strong for the interpreter to solve difficult transitions by the omission of offending verses. But the body of the book, as a whole, justifies its claim to Hoseanic authorship. The passages that must be denied to Hosea are relatively few, viz. 1: 1, 7; 1: 10-2: 1; 4: 11; 6: 11; 11: 9-11; 12: 3-6; 12: 12 f.; 14: 4-9; and probably 8: 14. The considerations leading to the setting aside of these verses will be found stated in the commentary

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in connection with the respective passages. In addition to these foreign elements it is probable that 2:6-7 and 9:16 are misplaced in their present positions.

Exception is taken by some interpreters to such passages as 2:6-7, 14-16, 18-23 and 3:5, on the ground that they are inconsistent with Hosea's messages of destruction and reflect the attitude of later prophets. But this position does not seem to be well taken. It is scarcely conceivable that a prophet who loved his nation as Hosea evidently did could have confined his preaching to words of doom. The whole purpose of the prophet's preaching was to bring about repentance and consequent deliverance. If he had had no hope of success, why did he preach? Surely a prophet could find no satisfaction in a message of destruction to a people for whom he knew there was no possibility of escape. Positing then an element of hope in the heart of the prophet, it remains only to determine whether the passages in question are otherwise intelligible as uttered by Hosea. For answer to this question, reference may be had to the interpretation of the material in the commentary.

3. TEXT

The text of the Book of Hosea is one of the worst preserved in the Old Testament. Many passages have been so mutilated as to be now unintelligible. Some of these can be restored with a fair degree of certainty by the aid of the translations into Greek and Syriac, especially the Septuagint and the Peshitto. In other cases, we have no recourse but critical conjecture, guided by the fragments of the text as it now stands, by the renderings of the Versions, and by the demands of the context. Varying degrees of approximation to certainty are attained

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by this process. But in not a few cases the recovery of the original reading of the text seems past hope, unless new copies of the text should be uncovered by the spade of some fortunate excavator. A suggestion of the difficulty of the text of Hosea is afforded by the long array of variant readings appended to many of the sections of the translation in the following commentary.

4. STYLE

The uncertainty of the text of Hosea complicates the effort to formulate a judgment of the literary style of the book. Much of the obscurity that now characterizes many passages is doubtless not to be charged against Hosea himself, but against those through whose hands the text has come down to the present time.

The vocabulary of Hosea is rich and varied. He uses many synonyms and thus avoids the monotony of the constant repetition of a few words. His utterance is more ornate than that of Amos and is especially characterized by its frequent similes, comparisons, and metaphors; cf. especially chaps. 5-7 and 13. This means a corresponding loss in simplicity, directness, and force. But this is more than atoned for by the added beauty and charm.

Hosea's words are poetic through and through. There is scarcely a prosaic phrase among them, aside from the biographical material in chaps. 1 and 3. He is an artist in words; he writes in pictures. His imagery is concrete and sensuous, worked out in some cases in detail and leaving little to the imagination. There is less regularity in the poetic form of Hosea than in that of Amos. The parallelism is, on the whole, less clearly marked and there is less evidence of strophic organization of the material.

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There are, for example, no recognizable poetic refrains in Hosea. This lack in the mechanical form is due to the dominance of the poetical spirit, which refuses to be limited in its expression by rigid formal considerations.

II. THE TIMES OF HOSEA

I. DATE

The tradition represented in the superscription of the Book of Hosea makes the prophet to have been contemporary with Amos in the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel and to have continued his activity on into the reign of Hezekiah. Tested by the contents of the prophecy, this tradition seems in general to be correct. The threat in 1:4 fixes for us the farthest point back that is definitely known within Hosea's lifetime. There the downfall of the house of Jehu is still in the future. That event took place in the murder of Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, within six months after the death of Jeroboam himself (2 Kings 15:8-12). Hosea therefore was prophesying in 743 B.C., but how long he had been a prophet at that time cannot be known. The lower limit to the period of his prophetic work seems to be indicated by the fact that he is wholly silent regarding the Syro-Ephraimite attack upon Judah in 735 B.C. This consideration is strengthened by the references in 5:1; 6:8, and 12:11 to the district of Gilead as being still in the possession of Israel; this was not true after the events of 735-734 B.C.

2. HISTORICAL SITUATION

The conditions reflected in Hosea's sermons accord well with what is known of the period from 745 B.C. to 735 B.C. Jeroboam's death (*ca.* 743) was followed by the murder

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of his son Zechariah in the same year, at the hands of Shallum. He in turn, after a month, was slain by Menahem, who took the throne and held it, after a short but bloody civil war, for a period of ten years. His son and successor Pekahiah was ousted and slain by Pekah, another usurper, who coöperated with Syria against Judah in 735 B.C. In addition to these internal troubles, Tiglath-pileser IV invaded Israel in 738 B.C., and exacted heavy tribute from her (2 Kings 15: 19 f.).

The prosperity that had characterized the reign of Jeroboam II rapidly disappeared upon his death. Internal strife, coupled with foreign invasion and heavy tribute, made the conditions of life and business unstable and drained the resources of the kingdom to the dregs. Amid charges of moral and religious degeneracy, Hosea includes an occasional statement that reveals the political and economic conditions of his time. He alludes twice (7: 3-7; 8: 10) to the dynastic changes, conspiracies, and murders of the day. He speaks of the overtures made by the government both to Assyria and to Egypt for succor (5: 13; 7: 8, 11; 8: 8 ff.; 12: 1). These appeals may have been from rival aspirants for the throne who sought foreign aid in their attempt to establish themselves. As a matter of fact, Menahem certainly held his throne by the grace of Assyria; and, a little later, the downfall of Pekah was aided by Assyria, who placed Hoshea upon the throne as his successor. The prophet realized clearly the relative weakness of his country in comparison with the great powers and the contempt felt for her by them (7: 9, 16; 8: 8; 13). He looked forward to the approaching downfall of his country, at the hands of either Assyria or Egypt; but seems to have been unable to decide between them (8: 13; 9: 3, 6; 10: 6; 11: 5). Either the

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relative strength of the two great powers and the outcome of the rivalry between them was not apparent in Hosea's time, or Hosea was not a keen observer of the political situation. As history has shown, the future lay in the hands of Assyria. But this was not so evident in the period from 750 to 735 B.C. as it is now. It has been contended that Hosea's work fell between 735 and 721 B.C. But Hosea's uncertainty regarding the outcome of the struggle for supremacy in the Western world seems to put such a supposition out of the question. After 735-732 B.C. there could have been no doubt regarding Assyria's power. She was then mistress of the West down to the very gates of Egypt. During the early years of Tiglath-pileser IV, there was room for uncertainty. He fell heir to a weak and disorganized kingdom. He was beset by foes on every hand, and spent his first ten years in bringing into subjection the people of Urartu on the north, the Syrians in the west, and the Babylonians to the south. Egypt was powerless to intervene effectively in western Asia during the whole period from 750-721 B.C. But she seems to have possessed a fatal facility in persuading the little Western folk to trust her and lean upon her. Hosea's attitude of uncertainty is intelligible, therefore, before 735-732 B.C., but incomprehensible after that date.

Hosea had fallen on evil days. Decline, degeneration, and destruction stared Israel in the face on every side. He saw his country trembling on the edge of the precipice, before the final plunge. It was his task to try to save her.

III. THE MAN

Hosea was not an outsider, like Amos, but a native citizen of the Northern Kingdom. This may be fairly inferred from the contents of his prophecies, though no

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direct statement is made regarding either his place of residence, his position in society, or his call to prophecy. His northern origin is indicated by his use of such phrases as "our king" (7:5), "in the house of Israel I saw" (6:10), and "the land" (1:2) as meaning Northern Israel. His detailed knowledge of affairs in the North and frequent mention of northern cities point in the same direction. The difference in attitude between him and Amos toward Israel may in part be due to the fact that Amos was an intruder while Hosea was at home. The evils of which Amos can speak without emotion break the heart of Hosea.

Hosea was endowed with a strongly emotional and high-strung temperament. The floods of conflicting emotions run high in his utterances. Love for his nation, hatred of the wicked and oppressive, tender regard for the afflicted and doomed people, severity in the denunciation of sin, and longing for deliverance from destruction follow one another in rapid succession and intertwine in all his thought. The rush of emotion at times makes his speech tumultuous. Beneath all this play of emotion there lay a profoundly religious view of life and of history, and this gave color and proportion to his whole message.

The outstanding feature in the all too brief account of his personal career is the story of his marriage and the birth of his three children. This has always held the attention of interpreters and has played a large part in their estimate of the character and personality of Hosea. The interpretation of this record which has found acceptance with most scholars in recent years is to the effect that Hosea fell in love with a young woman of good reputation, but with latent tendencies toward sensuality. Three children were born during the union, but not all

of them were Hosea's. He discovered his wife's infidelity, and at length she deserted him for another. His love for her led him to buy her back from her paramour, with the intention of restoring her to her former status as his wife, after having subjected her to restraint and seclusion for a period. Brooding upon this tragedy in his own experience, Hosea came to see the hand of Jehovah in it pointing out to him his prophetic message. For his own experience with his wife was but a duplicate of Jehovah's experience with Israel. Jehovah had loved Israel, but she had spurned his love and taken up with other gods. Hence she must be disciplined by exile before she can be taken back into Jehovah's favor.

Attractive as this interpretation is, because it presupposes so psychologically intelligible an experience, it nevertheless must be abandoned. The narrative as it stands will not support such a view; it leaves too many lacunæ to be filled in by the imagination. Not a word is said regarding Gomer's departure from home, nor as to the reason for Hosea's purchase of his recalcitrant wife, when she was already his by right and by law. Furthermore, the phrase "woman of harlotries" (1:2) is given a forced meaning when it is made to denote a woman with a tendency toward vice, rather than a vicious woman. The same peculiarity of construction occurs in Hos. 4:12 and 5:4 and also, *e.g.*, in Prov. 31:10; Ruth 3:11; Prov. 11:16 and 21:9, in none of which is there any suggestion of latent tendency or possibility as contrasted with an actual, positive characteristic or capacity. Again, so vital an element in the experience as the fact that Gomer's character was not discovered by Hosea until after the marriage could scarcely have been left unmentioned in the story. Lastly, that 3:1 should simply say

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“*a* wife,” rather than “*thy* wife,” is scarcely possible if the woman in question was Hosea’s fugitive wife.

The natural sense of the story requires that the woman be an out-and-out harlot, whom Hosea married with his eyes wide open. He was led to undertake this extraordinary step by the conviction that it was the will of God that he should so do. That Hosea should have conceived of Jehovah as requiring this repulsive act of him is a hypothesis fraught with no more difficulty morally than the view that he conceived of Jehovah as requiring him to marry a woman, who, as Jehovah knew, would turn out to be a harlot. Moral problems of this kind would not trouble men who were able to think of Jehovah as hardening Pharaoh’s heart to the end that he might be destroyed (Exod. 7:3 f. ; 10:1), or to represent Jehovah as moving David to number Israel in order that he might have a warrant for punishing him (2 Sam. 24:1 f.), or to inspire a body of prophets to tell a lie (1 Kings 22:20-23). The moral standards of to-day cannot be carried back and made applicable to the age of Hosea. Nor is the marriage of a woman of the street by the prophet psychologically difficult. The psychology of a prophet was not that of the normal man. He was dominated by the idea that he was the spokesman and representative of Jehovah. Anything that he could conceive of as Jehovah’s command would be of binding force upon him. The fact that the action called for was abnormal would be no obstacle to his performance of it. Witness such examples as are furnished in Ezek. 4:9-15; 24:16-18; Isa. 20:1-4; Jer. 16:1 f.

The extraordinary character of the marriage was in fact the warrant for its taking place. Its purpose required that it should attract widespread attention. It and the children that followed it were alike vivid object lessons

for all Israel. It was intended to provoke questioning on the part of the people that the way might be open for Hosea to deliver his message in reply. It was thus a lesson for the nation, not for Hosea himself. It was to show Israel how she was treating Jehovah, her spiritual husband. Instead of the loyalty to him which common decency required, she was running after other gods continually. In this connection, it must be borne in mind that the marriage is meant to represent the present situation in Israel; it is not a representation of past history. Consequently, it is not a part of its purpose to symbolize the initiation of the relationship between Jehovah and Israel, when all was as it should have been. It is the existing abnormal and shocking relationship that the prophet seeks to impress upon his people's consciousness.

Then, too, it is worthy of notice that Hosea was not made a prophet by his marriage, as has been maintained, for he was a prophet before his marriage. He entered upon the marriage itself in obedience to the voice of Jehovah in his soul (1:2). He gave the first child born a name of prophetic significance (1:4, 5), though not yet aware, on the current view, of his wife's unfaithfulness. It was because he was a prophetic spirit that a marriage of this sort was possible for him. A prophet had few rights that Jehovah was bound to respect.

This interpretation of the marriage experience emphasizes the self-sacrifice of Hosea. He looks upon himself as belonging wholly to his people and to his God. There is no sacrifice for the good of Israel or for the service of Jehovah that can be called too great. He is a willing tool in Jehovah's hands, absolutely submissive to Jehovah's will. "Shall the clay say to him who molds it, What makest thou?" (Isa. 45:9).

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Chapter 3, as ordinarily interpreted, has yielded the strongest support for the view that Hosea's wife first fell into evil ways after her marriage. But there is not the slightest necessity for interpreting it as a second stage in Hosea's experience with Gomer. It is equally natural to regard it as another version of the original marriage. To make the story complete, we need both versions. From these we may reconstruct the narrative thus: Hosea felt himself called upon by Jehovah to marry a prostitute, living with her paramour in open shame. Perhaps he put the thought away from him for a time; but the conviction would not down. "Jehovah said to me again, Go, etc." Hence, he took to wife Gomer bath Diblaim. During this union, three children were born, of whom Hosea makes use, each in turn, to repeat to Israel the message conveyed likewise by the marriage itself. Thereupon, Hosea places his wife under restraint and in seclusion, breaking off all marital relations with her, and thus conveys to Israel the announcement that the nation's unfaithfulness to Jehovah will make her captivity and exile necessary, and that only after purification by such disciplinary treatment can she be restored to the favor of Jehovah.

The man who could take upon himself a relationship like that and could exploit his act for the education of the public was not only utterly self-abasing and self-effacing in his devotion to his country, but was evidently endowed with a strongly dramatic temperament. This, combined with the inherent value of his message, succeeded in impressing his preaching deeply upon the consciousness of Israel, so that it became a permanent element in Hebrew religion.

IV. THE MESSAGE OF HOSEA

Amos was concerned with the rights of man, Hosea with the rights of God. Hosea was not blind to "man's inhumanity to man." But his teaching was not so distinctively and prevaillingly social as that of Amos. In his enumeration of the shortcomings of Israel in the ethical sphere, he never once mentions the poor and their sufferings; cf. 4:2; 5:11; 6:8, 9; 10:4; 12:7, 8. This was because his whole being was absorbed in the theme of Israel's attitude toward Jehovah. His fundamental note is that Israel should be loyal to Jehovah to the exclusion of all other gods, by reason of the fact that he has chosen her as his own people from among the peoples of the earth. Hence Hosea attacks the Baal-worship of his day with uncompromising hostility; cf. 2:8, 13, 16, 17; 7:16; 11:2; 13:1. The hold of Baalism upon the popular consciousness was tenacious. Israel had come into Canaan from the desert. Their God had been able to supply all their need as nomads. But now they had come into a new world. They were under the necessity of learning the ways of the new agricultural life from the Canaanites. But the Canaanites carried on their agricultural operations under the auspices of the local Baalim, the gods of the land. The religion of Baal and the tillage of the soil were inseparably connected. If the Hebrews would learn successful farming, they must take over with it a lot of Baalistic usages. The Baalim had reigned supreme over the soil of the land and its products for centuries. Could Jehovah dispossess them from their heritage? Would it not be folly to forsake the gods who had long granted the gifts of the soil and to trust one's fortunes to a god who had thus far been associated with wholly

different interests? This struggle between Jehovah and the Baalim was still keen in Hosea's time, and Hosea therefore insists upon Jehovah's exclusive claim to recognition even in the domain of agriculture; cf. especially 2:3-13.

Out of the same feeling of loyalty to Jehovah arose Hosea's protest against the political programmes of the day. Some look for aid to Egypt; others to Assyria; cf. 5:13; 7:8-12; 8:9, 10; 12:1; 14:3. But to Hosea all such policies mean lack of faith in Jehovah. Is not he able and willing to care for all the interests of his people, if they will but walk in his way? Such distrust of him is in itself a heinous sin.

Elijah, Elisha, and Amos had said nothing against the image-worship of their day. But to Hosea, with his spiritual conception of God, such a materialistic representation of Jehovah was unendurable. He therefore denounces image-worship in general (4:12, 17; 11:2; 14:3) and, in particular, the cultus of the golden calves (8:5, 6; 10:5, 6; 13:2). To the mind of the prophet there was little to choose between calf-worship and Baalism. The misconception of Jehovah inseparable from the worship of him under the guise of a calf, so distorted his character as to put him on a level but little above that of the Baalim. Both rituals alike emphasized the generative, life-giving, fertilizing powers of the deity and consequently degenerated into crass sensuality; 4:2, 10, 13, 14, 18. So Hosea attacked the cultus, just as Amos had done; though from a different point of view. Amos had objected to cultus as a substitute for justice toward fellow-men; Hosea objects that the cultus in itself is bad. It is the expression of a wrong conception of Jehovah.

It is for this reason that Hosea is always talking about the necessity of a knowledge of Jehovah; cf. 2:8, 20;

3:1, 6; 5:4; 6:6; 11:3. The great sin of Israel is that of inexcusable ignorance. She has had innumerable evidences of Jehovah's attitude toward her; but has steadily refused to learn by her experiences. This, for Hosea, is the tragedy of Hebrew history. He himself is dominated by the thought of Jehovah's love for Israel and he is amazed and grief-stricken because that love receives no adequate recognition or return in Israel. It is, on the contrary, met by the basest ingratitude.

There is but one possible outcome of such a situation, viz. punishment and that of the most drastic character. There is a way of escape through genuine repentance; but this way Israel will not take. Hence, she must be carried into exile that she may realize the powerlessness of the gods in whom she has placed her trust and may come to a new consciousness of Jehovah's love. Chastised and purified, she may once more return to her land and there worship Jehovah with a zeal according to knowledge and with an undivided heart.

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A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HOSEA

I. THE SUPERScription, 1 : 1

1 : 2

1. THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

II. THE UNHAPPY MARRIAGE OF HOSEA, 1 : 2-9

2. When the LORD spake at the first by¹ Hosea,² the LORD said unto Hosea,
Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom
and children of whoredom :

¹ m. *with.* ² Gr., Syr., Vulg., Tg. *The beginning of the word (or speaking) of Jehovah through Hosea.*

1. **Hosea**; nothing is known of him, nor of **Beeri**, his father, aside from what this book tells us. Hosea was probably a native of Northern Israel (see Introduction, § III). **In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah**; this would place Hosea's activity beginning at least as early as 785 B.C. and as lasting till at least 715 B.C., a period of about 70 years. **And in the days of Jeroboam**, who reigned from about 780 B.C. to about 743 B.C. But it seems fairly certain that the period of Hosea's ministry cannot have extended longer than from some time before 743 B.C. to 735 B.C. (see Introduction, § II). This fact, together with the further facts that a northern prophet would scarcely have placed the kings of Judah before his own king, and that most of the superscriptions to prophetic books have undergone editorial modification at least, makes it clear that this superscription is from the pen of a later editor.

2. **When the Lord spake at the first**; better either *in the beginning when Jehovah spake*, or *the beginning of that which*

For the land doth commit great whoredom,
departing from the LORD.

3. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Dib-
4. laim; and she conceived, and bare him a son. And
the LORD said unto him,
Call his name Jezreel;
for yet a little while,
And I will avenge ¹ the blood of Jezreel
upon the house of Jehu,²
And will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel
to cease.

¹ m. Heb. *visit.*

² Gr. *Judah.*

Jehovah spake. This seems to be a special superscription, belonging particularly to chaps. 1-3, which certainly contain the earliest known prophecies of Hosea. **Go, take, etc.**; the precise meaning of this statement is one of the chief problems in the book of Hosea. Is it to be understood as implying that Hosea deliberately married a harlot, knowing her character at the time, but believing himself ordered of Jehovah to enter upon this repugnant alliance? Or, does it mean rather that Hosea in the heyday of his youth married a young woman whom he supposed to be virtuous, that she forsook the path of virtue after her marriage, and that Hosea, looking back upon the whole heartbreaking experience, interpreted it as Jehovah's way of preparing him for and calling him to the work of a prophet? In view of all the facts, it seems better to adopt the former view (see Introduction, § III). **Commit great whoredom, departing from the Lord**; the prophet presents the relation between Jehovah and Israel as that between husband and wife. Israel is charged with having forsaken Jehovah for other gods.

3. **Gomer the daughter of Diblaim**; nothing is known of this woman nor her father aside from what Hosea tells us. Her name, unlike that of her children, has no certain symbolical significance.

4. **Call his name Jezreel**; cf. the names given by Isaiah to his sons (7: 3; 8: 1-4; cf. 7: 14). **I will avenge the blood of Jezreel, i.e. the massacre by Jehu of the royal family and its supporters**; see 2 Kings 9: 30-10: 14. This was evidently uttered before the close of the reign of Jeroboam II, for the end

5. And it shall come to pass at that day,
That I will break the bow of Israel
in the valley of Jezreel.
6. And she conceived again, and bare a daughter.
And *the LORD* said unto him,¹
Call her name Lo-ruhamah:²
for I will no more
Have mercy upon the house of Israel,
that I should in any wise pardon them.³
7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah,
and will save them by the LORD their God,
And will not save them by bow, nor by sword,
nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

¹ Syr. *And Jehovah said to me.* Heb. *And he said to him.* ² m. That is, *That hath not obtained mercy.* ³ Syr. *for I will carry them away, completely.* Vg. *but I will wholly forget them.* Gr. *but I will surely array myself against them.*

of his dynasty came only six months after his death with the murder of his son Zechariah. **Will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease**; Hosea clearly expected the end of the dynasty of Jehu and the fall of the Northern Kingdom to come together. But the latter event did not arrive till 721 B.C.

5. **The bow**, *i.e.* the power (Gen. 49:24; Jer. 49:35; Job 29:20). **In the valley of Jezreel**; as the scene of the crime it is most fittingly chosen as the scene likewise of the vengeance. Jezreel lay in the plain of Esdraelon, the site of many important battles. No evidence of any event which would literally comply with this prediction is available. The difference between Hosea's estimate of Jehu's acts and that of the prophetic contemporaries of Jehu is striking and of great significance for a right understanding of prophecy.

6. **Lo-ruhamah**, *i.e.* *she is not pitied, or loved.* **I will no more have mercy**; the decree of punishment is irrevocable. Thus early in his prophecy, Hosea declares the case of Israel to be hopeless.

7. **But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah**; this verse is quite generally conceded to be a later addition to the prophecy. It unduly interrupts the story of Hosea's family affairs; its attitude toward Judah is that of other late passages in Hosea, not that of Hosea himself; it seems to reflect a knowl-

8. Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. And *the LORD* said,
 Call his name Lo-ammi:¹
 for ye are not my people,
 and I will not be your *God*.²

III. A PROMISE OF RESTORATION TO JEHOVAH'S FAVOR,

I : 10-2 : 1

10. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea,
 which cannot be measured nor numbered ;

¹ m. *i.e.*, not my people.

² m. Heb. for you.

edge of the marvellous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib in 701 B.C., and the phrase **Jehovah their God** is a characteristic expression of the Deuteronomic writers. **Will not save them by bow**, etc.; this reliance upon Jehovah alone with renunciation of all ordinary means of defence is a state of mind belonging to later times when the powerlessness of Judah had become only too apparent; cf. Ezek. 39: 1-10; Joel 2: 32; 3: 14-17; Zech. 14: 3 ff.

8. **When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah**, etc.; the period covered by the birth of the three children would approximate six years, and perhaps more, since children were not weaned till they were two or three years old.

9. **Lo-ammi**, *i.e.* not my people, symbolizes the complete break of the relationship between Jehovah and Israel. **And I will not be your God**; *God* is supplied here by the translators; the Heb. says only *and I am not for you*, which is equivalent to "I have nothing to do with you." This is sufficiently clear and strong and needs no addition.

I : 10-2 : 1. This passage is denied to Hosea by many interpreters, since it interrupts a context concerned wholly with punishment and it presupposes the exile of Judah as having already taken place. The latter consideration certainly seems to dispose of the claim of vs. 11 to Hoseanic origin, and the former at least compels us to suppose that this passage was not placed in its present position by Hosea.

10. **Children of Israel** are probably here the northern Israelites. **As the sand of the sea**; for similar promises, cf. Mic. 2: 12;

And it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God.

11. And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.
2. Say ye unto your brethren,¹ Ammi;² and to your sisters,³ Ruhamah.⁴

IV. ISRAEL'S SIN, PUNISHMENT, REPENTANCE, AND RESTORATION, 2: 2-23

1. *The Sin of Israel*, 2: 2-5

2. Plead⁵ with your mother, plead;⁵ for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband:

¹ Gr. *brother*. ² m. *my people*. ³ Gr. *sister*. ⁴ m. *That hath obtained mercy*.
⁵ Gr. and Vg. *judge*.

Isa. 48: 19. In the place where it was said; better, *instead of its being said*. Sons of the living God, *i.e.* in distinction from the worshippers of lifeless idols.

11. The disruption of the kingdom was brought about in part by the influence of contemporary prophets (cf. 1 Kings 11: 29 ff.; 12: 22 ff.). This prophet does not necessarily condemn that act as unwise or ungodly; but he does look forward to a time when the schism shall be healed; cf. Is. 11: 13; Ezek. 37: 22. **One head**, *i.e.* a king from David's line. **And shall go up from the land**, *i.e.* from the land of exile, in order to return home. **The day of Jezreel**; the name Jezreel now receives a new interpretation; whereas in 1: 4 it signified destruction, it here means restoration. It is the day of Jehovah upon which he will smite Israel's foes and exalt Israel to a position of power.

1. This repeats essentially the thought of 1: 10; cf. 2: 23. Say ye; it is not clear to whom this is addressed. It looks much

- And let her put away¹ her whoredoms from her²
face,
and her adulteries from between her breasts ;
3. Lest I strip her naked,
and set her as in the day that she was born,
And make her as a wilderness,
and set her³ like a dry land,
and slay her with thirst ;
4. Yea, upon her children will I have no mercy ;
for they be children of whoredom.
5. For their mother hath played the harlot :
she that conceived them hath done shamefully :

¹ Gr. and I will take away.² Gr. my.³ Syr. omits set her.

like a fragment torn from its original context and misplaced here. It may have been spoken to the citizens of Judah, urging them to recognize and receive the returning exiles from Northern Israel as Jehovah's people; or to those who had remained at home, calling them to welcome the returning exiles.

2. **Plead**; better, *strive*; the Israelites are addressed as individuals. **Your mother**, *i.e.* the nation as a whole. **For she is not my wife**, etc.; a parenthetical statement, perhaps added by a later hand, calling attention to the fact that the natural relation of Jehovah to Israel has been broken off. **And let her put away her whoredoms**; this is the purpose of the "striving" urged upon the Israelites. The worship of other gods by Israel is incompatible with loyalty to Jehovah.

3. **Strip her naked**; the figure of the adulterous woman still holds. We have no other reference to such a custom as this in Israel, though it is known to have been in force elsewhere. **As in the day that she was born**; cf. Ezek. 16:39. Then Israel was without any kind of possessions and so in need of everything. **And make her as a wilderness**, etc.; the figurative element here gives way to the real, and the fate awaiting land and people is set forth.

4. **Will I have no mercy**; a reaffirmation of 1:6. **Children of whoredom**; cf. 1:2.

5. **Their mother hath played the harlot**, *i.e.* Israel has been false to Jehovah. Children suffer for the parents' sins (cf. Deut. 5:9); hence the individual Israelites bear punishment

For she said, I will go after my lovers,
that give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax,
mine oil and my drink.¹

2. *Jehovah must chastise Israel, 2:6-13*

6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way² with
thorns,
and I will make a fence against her, that she shall
not find her paths.
7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall
not overtake them;
and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:
Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first
husband;
for then was it better with me than now.

¹ m. Heb. *drinks*. Gr. *whatever befits me*.

² Gr. *her way*.

for the sins of the nation. **My lovers**, *i.e.* the Baalim, or local deities worshipped in Canaan from the earliest times and still recognized in Hosea's day as the givers of the crops, etc. The struggle between Jehovah and the Baalim for complete supremacy in Canaan was not yet finished. Hosea is an ardent champion of Jehovah.

Vss. 6 and 7 seem out of place here, for they interrupt the excellent connection between vs. 5 and vs. 8 and they introduce the element of punishment somewhat prematurely; it is not in place logically before the close of vs. 9. There is not sufficient reason, however, for denying the verses to Hosea; they have simply been misplaced by an editor of the book.

6. **Thy way**; better as in Gr. *her way*; "cf. *her paths*." The ways in which Israel has walked are to be rendered impassable and untraceable. All her efforts to obtain help through gods other than Jehovah will prove futile.

7. The blessings Israel expects from the Baalim will utterly fail her in spite of all her zeal in their behalf. This will bring her to her senses and drive her to take refuge in Jehovah. **For then was it better with me than now**; in her days of suffering

8. For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and
the wine, and the oil,
and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they
used for Baal.¹
9. Therefore will I take back² my corn in the time
thereof,
and my wine in the season thereof,
And will pluck away my wool, and my flax³
which should have covered her nakedness.
10. And now will I discover her lewdness⁴ in the sight
of her lovers,
and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.
11. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts,
her new moons,
and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies.⁵

¹ Gr. *And silver I have multiplied for her. This one, however, made (things) of silver and gold for the Baal.* Syr. *and silver and gold I multiplied to her, and from it they made Baal.* m. *made into the image of Baal.* ² m. *return, and take away.* ³ Gr. *my garments.* ⁴ m. *shame.* ⁵ m. *appointed feasts.*

and disaster, Israel will look back longingly to the days of prosperity when she served Jehovah. The prophet can have in mind only the period before the conquest of Canaan, for the worship of the Baalim by Israel set in immediately thereafter.

8. This is in direct continuation of vs. 5. **Which they used for Baal**; this is the climax of ingratitude and insult. It is uncertain whether the use spoken of was that these things were offered to the Baalim in sacrifice, etc., or that the gold and silver had been converted into images of the Baalim.

9. The withdrawal of the blessings will bring Israel to a recognition of the fact that they do not come from the Baalim, but from Jehovah. For all the prayers and offerings presented to the Baalim will be of no avail in bringing back the desired blessings. **Covered her nakedness**; cf. Ezek. 16:8.

10. **And now**, *i.e.* and so, or consequently. **Her lovers**, *i.e.* the Baalim, who are regarded by the prophet as real gods. **And none shall deliver her**; the Baalim will be forced to stand by and look helplessly upon the distress of Israel.

11. **Her mirth, her feasts**, etc.; it is noticeable that mirth is

12. And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
 whereof she hath said,
 these are my hire that my lovers have given me:
 And I will make them a forest,¹ and the beasts of
 the field shall eat them.
13. and I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim,
 unto which she burned incense;²
 When she decked herself with her earrings³ and her
 jewels,
 and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the
 LORD.

3. *The Restoration of Israel to Jehovah's Favor, 2:14-23*

14. Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
 and bring her into the wilderness, and speak com-
 fortably⁴ unto her.

¹ Gr. *a witness*.
⁴ m. Heb. *to her heart*.

² m. *wherein she burned incense to them*.

³ m. *nose-rings*.

here defined as consisting in religious activities. The religion of early Israel was joyous through and through; cf. Exod. 32:5 f.; Judg. 21:19 ff.; 1 Sam. 1:3, 7, 13 ff. There was as yet no deep-seated consciousness of the wrath of Jehovah resting upon Israel.

12. Vines and fig trees, representative of all the products of the soil. My hire that my lovers have given me; the rewards given Israel by the Baalim for her service. A forest; better, *a thicket*, as also in 1 Sam. 14:25 f.; Isa. 21:13; Jer. 26:18. Beasts of the field, *i.e.* wild animals.

13. The days of the Baalim; the period during which Israel has worshipped these Canaanitish gods. Burned incense; or more generally, *made offering*. Decked herself; the figure of the harlot is still in mind; but it is also a fact that jewelry was often a part of Semitic sacred costumes. Forgot me; the worship of the Baalim was regarded by the prophets as incompatible with the worship of Jehovah.

14. Israel is to be led away from her land and subjected to gentle discipline. The mercy of Jehovah will not fail her; but she will be sustained thereby.

15. And I will give her her vineyards¹ from thence,
and the valley of Achor² for a door of hope:³
And she shall make answer⁴ there, as in the days of
her youth,
and as in the day when she came up out of the
land of Egypt.
16. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that
thou shalt call⁵ me Ishi;⁶
and shalt call⁶ me no more Baali.⁷
17. For I will take away the names of the Baalim out
of her mouth,
and they shall no more be mentioned⁸ by their
name.
18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them
with the beasts of the field,

¹ Gr. *her vines*; Vg. *her vinedressers*. ² m. *i.e., troubling*. ³ Gr. *to open her understanding*. Vg. *to open hope*. Syr. *that her understanding may be opened*. ⁴ m. *sing*; so Vg. Gr. and Syr. *be humbled*. ⁵ Gr., Vg., *he will call*. ⁶ m. *my husband*. ⁷ m. *my master*. ⁸ m. *be remembered*.

15. **From thence**, *i.e.* she will be restored from the place of exile to the vineyards whence she was snatched away. **Valley of Achor**; a valley on the northern boundary of Judah (Josh. 7:24; 15:7). This valley, the name of which is *troubling*, will be a veritable **door of hope** to the returning exiles as they pass through it in their approach to Judah. **And she shall make answer there**, etc.; Israel will again respond joyfully and loyally to Jehovah's will, as she did in the days of her early history.

16. The name **Ishi**, *i.e. my husband*, expresses the new conception of Jehovah, in contrast with the old, denoted by the name **Baali**, *i.e. my Baal*, or *my master*. This latter name implies the thought of Jehovah as but one Baal among many other Baals, though certainly the chief Baal. The prophet thinks of Jehovah as radically different from the Baalim.

17. The passing away of the Baals will be so complete that their very names will be forgotten.

18. This idyllic description of universal peace, not only between man and man, but also between animals and man, expresses the longing of a soul weary of the strife and bloodshed of the

and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground :

And I will break¹ the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land,
and will make them to lie down safely.

19. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ;
yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness,
and in judgement, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness :
and thou shalt know the LORD.

21. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer,²
saith the LORD,

I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth ;

22. And the earth shall answer the corn, and the wine, and the oil ;
and they shall answer Jezreel.³

¹ Syr., Tg. *I will cause to cease.* ² Gr., Syr. om. *I will answer.* ³ m. i. e., *whom God soweth.*

world as he has known it. Many scholars regard this verse as a later addition to the book of Hosea, but such hopes as these are timeless. They have no roots in the soil of any particular age, and there is nothing in them inconsistent with early origin.

19. **I will betroth thee unto me for ever** ; the marriage that has been broken off is to be renewed, never to be sundered again. **Judgement** ; perhaps, better, *justice*. **Righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, mercies, and faithfulness** (vs. 20) are to be the gifts of Jehovah to his bride. They are in part qualities that he desires in her and, in part, representative of his own attitude toward her.

20. **Thou shalt know the Lord** ; the knowledge of Jehovah that results from this process of discipline and education fitting her to be Jehovah's bride is an insight into his real character and a consequently new understanding of his requirements, which are spiritual and moral, and cannot be satisfied by ritual.

21-22. The people of Israel (= **Jezreel**), in the good days to

23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth;¹
 and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy;²
 And I will say to them which were not my people,³
 Thou art my people;
 and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

V. HOSEA'S PURCHASE OF A WIFE AND HER DISCIPLINE,
 3: 1-5

3. And the LORD said unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend and⁴ an adulteress, even as the LORD loveth the children of Israel, though they turn unto other gods, and love⁵ cakes of raisins. So I

¹ m. *land*. ² Heb. *Lo-ruhamah*. ³ Heb. *Lo-ammi*. ⁴ m. *of her husband, yet an etc.*; Gr. and Syr. *loving evil and etc.* ⁵ m. *them that love etc.*

come, will call upon the soil for crops; they in turn will appeal to the heavens for rain; and the heavens will turn to Jehovah, the giver of the rain, who will grant the coveted blessing. Without his aid, there can be no enjoyment of the fruits of the earth; cf. 2: 8-13.

23. **I will sow her**, etc.; the scattered Israel will be brought back and re-sown in her own land that she may bring forth fruit unto Jehovah. **I will have mercy**, etc.; the old relationship between Jehovah and his people will be fully restored; cf. 1: 9.

There is nothing in verses 21-23 that is inconsistent with Hosea's authorship. He certainly entertained hopes for his nation after the days of punishment and purification were over. The things promised here are but the restoration of what had been taken away in punishment.

On the general bearing of this chapter upon the story of Hosea's life, see Introduction, pp. 78-79.

1. **Go yet, love a woman**; opinions have differed as to whether this was a command to renew his love for Gomer, the first wife, and to restore her to the position to which she had forfeited all claim, or to transfer his affections to another woman of equally bad reputation. It seems more likely, however, that this is but another version of the story of his first marriage. In that case, **yet** is either due to the pen of an editor who did not

2. bought¹ her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and an homer of barley,² and an half homer³ of barley:⁴
3. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be any man's wife: so will I also be toward thee.
4. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar,⁵ and without ephod or

¹ Gr. and Syr. *and I hired.* ² Syr. omits *of barley.* ³ Heb. *lethech.* ⁴ Gr. *a skin of wine.* ⁵ m. *obelisk*; Gr., Syr., and Vg. *altar.*

understand the real situation and regarded this as a new stage in Hosea's marital experience; or, better still, it is to be connected with the preceding verb and translated, *And Jehovah said to me again, Go*, etc. This implies either a repetition of the command to marry a harlot, or a previous commission that has not been recorded here. **Beloved of her friend and an adulteress**; "friend" conveys a wrong impression here; it is rather a *paramour*; cf. Jer. 3:1; Lam. 1:2. The description accords perfectly with that in 1:2. Even as Hosea will love her while she longs for other men, so Jehovah loves Israel, while **they turn unto other gods**, *i.e.* to the Baalim of the local shrines throughout Israel; cf. 2:8, 13, 17. **And love cakes of raisins**; these were evidently favorite offerings in the worship of the Baalim; cf. 2 Sam. 6:19.

2. **So I bought her to me**; this militates against the view that the woman in question had already been married to Hosea and had forsaken him for another; for in that case Hosea would be under no obligation to pay for her restoration to himself. It is rather the price that Hosea paid when he first married Gomer. Marriage was commonly regarded as a purchase in early Israel; cf. Gen. 29:15 ff. **An homer**, *i.e.* about eight bushels. **Half homer**; this is only a guess; the meaning of the Heb. word *lethech* is wholly unknown.

3. The evil ways of the past must be forsaken and by long isolation she may fit herself to be Hosea's wife in fact as well as in name. Yet Hosea asks of his wife only the same loyalty that he offers on his own part.

4. Israel, like Hosea's wife, must go into isolation and be deprived of all her legitimate privileges, both political and religious, that thereby she may come into a true appreciation of Jehovah. The exile is clearly foretold here. **Pillar**; the con-

5. teraphim:¹ afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall come with fear unto the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

VI. JEHOVAH'S QUARREL WITH ISRAEL, 4: 1-19

1. *The Quarrel and its Cause*, 4: 1-3

4. Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land,
because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.
2. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith,

¹ Gr. *priesthood or oracles*.

secrated stone which accompanied practically every altar and was an object of worship. **Ephod**; an image, probably of Jehovah (cf. Judg. 8: 26 f.; 17: 3, 5, 13; 1 Sam. 23: 6, 9 ff.), much used in the process of obtaining oracles from Jehovah. **Teraphim**; evidently an image of some god (cf. Judg. 18: 20; 1 Sam. 19: 13), and apparently in good repute in early Israel.

5. The exile will yield fruits of righteousness for Israel; she will be cured of her idolatrous practices. **David their king**; the prophet looks for a reunion of the two kingdoms under the Davidic dynasty in the post-exilic period. **Come with fear**; an attitude of awe will characterize their relations to Jehovah because of the terrible chastisement they have endured. **And to his goodness**, *i.e.* his blessings. **In the latter days**; the indefinite future.

1. **A controversy**; a term denoting a case in court. **Truth, mercy, knowledge of God**; these are the requirements of Jehovah from his people. The moral qualities have their root in a right conception of God.

2. **Swearing**; not profanity, but the taking of an oath in the name of Jehovah, which is right enough in itself. But they take such oaths only in the expectation of **breaking faith**, which was one of the most heinous of offences. This and the following crimes show a condition of moral chaos in Israel such as set in

and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out,¹ and blood toucheth² blood.

3. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish,³ with the beasts of the field⁴ and the fowls of heaven;
Yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.⁵

2. *The Priest's Responsibility for Israel's Sin, 4:4-6*

4. Yet⁶ let no man strive, neither let any man reprove; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.⁷

¹ Gr. (and committing adultery) are poured out upon the land. Vg. have overflowed. Syr. have spread. ² Syr. mingles with. ³ Gr. shall be diminished with all etc. Syr. shall mourn. ⁴ Gr. adds and with the creeping things of the earth. ⁵ Vg. shall be gathered together. Gr. shall depart. ⁶ Vg., however. Syr. because no one is etc. Gr. in order that no etc. ⁷ Gr., my people are like a rebellious priest. Syr., thy people are striving like a priest.

after the death of Jeroboam II. They break out; the precise meaning here eludes us; some would refer it to burglars breaking in and plundering houses. Some régime of violence is evidently thus characterized. A slight change of text would yield *they crush, i.e. the poor. Blood toucheth blood*; one crime follows hard upon the heels of another.

3. **Shall the land mourn**; better, here and in the following verbs, taken as present, *doth the land mourn*, this and the following being a description and explanation of the existing conditions, rather than a threat for the future. The prophet, apparently, is speaking at a time of severe drought. **Every one that dwelleth therein**, including both man and beast, as the verse goes on to state. **The fishes of the sea**; this item might be urged as pointing to a coming rather than a present disaster, on the ground that no actually existing drought ever had so terrible an effect. But allowance must always be made for the rhetorical language of the prophets. The word *sea* is at times used of "rivers," and the drying up of rivers, with consequent disaster to the fish in them, is a natural result of drought.

4. **Yet let no man strive**, etc.; no one is in a position to complain against another, for they are all alike guilty. **For thy people**, etc.; better, with a slight change of text, *for my people are like its priestlings*, people and priests are alike bad.

5. And thou shalt stumble¹ in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with thee² in the night; and I will destroy thy mother.³
6. My people are destroyed⁴ for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject⁵ thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children.
3. *The Contagion of the Priest's Wickedness, 4:7-10*
7. As they were multiplied, so they sinned against me:⁶ I will change⁷ their glory into shame.

¹ Gr. *and he shall be weak.* Syr. *and thou shalt be heavy.* ² Some MSS. of Gr. *him.* ³ Gr. *by night I made thy mother similar.* Vg. *at night I made thy mother silent.* Syr. *and thy mother was silent.* ⁴ Gr. *was made similar.* Vg. *was silent.* ⁵ m. according to another reading, *I have rejected.* ⁶ Syr. omits *against me.* ⁷ Syr. and Tg. *they changed.*

5. **And thou shalt stumble in the day;** better, connecting the last word of vs. 4 with this vs., *O priest, thou shalt stumble by day.* This is an announcement of the fate awaiting the priesthood; in the full light of day, the priests will be unable to control their course. **And the prophet,** *i.e.* the self-seeking prophets who prostitute their high calling to base ends. **In the night;** the very time when the prophet was most apt to receive his visions and dreams will be the time of his downfall; there will be no guiding vision for him. **And I will destroy thy mother;** if the text is correct, "mother" must designate either the nation as a whole or the priestly order. But probably the text should be corrected to read *thy people, i.e.* the nation of Israel.

6. **For lack of knowledge;** Israel has refused to learn the lessons taught by the prophets; hence, she must come to ruin. Knowledge of the true character of Jehovah and his requirements is what the prophet laments as wanting. **Thou;** evidently, the priesthood. The northern priesthood is to be discredited in the eyes of all by the fall of the kingdom. **The law of thy God;** this was chiefly the oral teachings of the priests and prophets, though the Decalogue and the Covenant Code were probably already in existence. **Thy children,** either the descendants of the priests of Hosea's day, or the people in general; cf. the Catholic designation of the priest as "father."

7. **They** signifies the priests; cf. vs. 8. Prosperity has made

8. They feed on the sin¹ of my people,
and set their heart on their iniquity.²
9. And it shall be, like people, like priest:
and I will punish them for their ways, and will
reward them their doings.
10. And they shall eat, and not have enough;
they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase:³
because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.⁴

4. *The Sensual Idolatry of Israel*, 4: 11-14

11. Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the
understanding.⁵

¹ Gr. and Vg. *sins*. ² Gr. *their iniquities*. ³ Gr. *shall not find pleasure*. Vg. *and have ceased*. ⁴ Gr. *have forsaken Jehovah in order to preserve* (vs. 11) *harlotry*; Syr. *have forsaken Jehovah and love* (vs. 11) *harlotry*. ⁵ Heb. *heart*.

them more sinful. **I will change** is better read, as in Syr. and Tg., *they have changed*. **Their glory**, *i.e.* their position as representatives of Jehovah, the righteous God.

8. **The sin of my people** is the fact that they multiply sacrifices and offerings to Jehovah in the belief that this is the kind of worship which he most desires. The priests indorse that point of view, for it adds greatly to their own resources, seeing that they receive a share of the sacrifices. **Their iniquity**; the sin of the people in the practice of the sacrificial cultus.

9. **And it shall be**; better, *it has come to be*. **Like people, like priest**; both are equally guilty. Those who should have furnished an example of holy and godly life are no better than the corrupt masses. Therefore, punishment awaits both priests and people.

10. Famine will be one element in the work of chastisement. **Shall not increase**, *i.e.* shall have no children; but children were not sought from such sensual practices. Hence, it is better to follow the Greek rendering and, slightly changing the text, read, *shall find no satisfaction*. Heedlessness of Jehovah's will cannot go unpunished.

11. This is a parenthetic comment interrupting the progress of thought from vs. 10 to vs. 12. It probably originated as a marginal note by some editor or reader. **Debauchery makes fools of men**.

12. My people ask counsel at their stock,
and their staff declareth unto them:
For the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err,
and they have played the harlot from under their
God.
13. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains,
and burn incense upon the hills,
Under oaks and poplars and terebinths,
because the shadow thereof is good:
Therefore your daughters play the harlot,
and your brides¹ commit adultery.
14. I will not punish your daughters when they play
the harlot,
nor your brides¹ when they commit adultery;
For they themselves go apart with harlots,
and they sacrifice with the harlots:

¹ m. *daughters-in-law*.

12. **Their stock, their staff**, evidently a protest against the consultation of images for the purpose of learning the divine will. The images referred to may possibly have been the ephod and teraphim. **The spirit of whoredom, played the harlot**; these expressions are figurative, denoting Israel's disloyalty to Jehovah.

13. **Sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains**; a practice taken over from the Canaanitish Baalism and therefore obnoxious to Jehovah. **Burn incense**; better, *make offerings*; the term is comprehensive enough to include incense offerings, but cannot be confined to them. **Under oaks**, etc.; trees have always occupied an important place in nature religions, being looked upon as favorite lodging places of deity. **Therefore your daughters play the harlot**, etc.; the practice of licentious rites was a vital part of Baalism and religions related to it. If the fathers take up the cultus of the Baalim, they need not be surprised when their daughters depart from the path of virtue.

14. Though the women are guilty, yet they will not be punished, for the responsibility for their guilt rests upon their fathers and husbands who led the way into guilt. **Go apart**; it seems to have been the custom to indulge in these licentious practices out-

And the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown.¹

5. *Israel's Incurable Guilt*, 4: 15-19

15. Though thou, Israel, play the harlot,
yet let not Judah offend;²
And come not ye unto Gilgal,
neither go ye up to Beth-aven,³
nor swear, As the LORD liveth.
16. For Israel hath behaved himself stubbornly, like
a stubborn⁴ heifer:
now will the LORD feed them as a lamb in a large
place.

¹ Gr. *the people that understands was entangled (with harlotry [using two first words of vs. 15]).* ² m. *become guilty.* Gr. *but thou, Israel, do not err; and Judah, do not enter into Gilgal, etc.* Syr. *Israel, do not thou make Judah guilty.* ³ Gr. *to the house of On.* Tg. *Bethel.* ⁴ Vg. *lascivious.*

side of the sacred precincts of the sanctuaries. **Harlots**, *i.e.* women who sacrificed their virtue in honor of the deity and were regarded as "holy" on that account. **Doth not understand**; the only basis for national perpetuity is a right conception of God and of his requirements.

15. Some scholars regard this vs. as of later origin, because of its reference to Judah and the different attitude toward Judah in 5: 5, 10, 13 f.; 6: 4. But only the first half of the vs. concerns Judah; Israel and Judah were so vitally related that a prophet could hardly avoid considering them both together; and the wish that Judah might refrain from sin is not inconsistent with the fact that she has already *become guilty*. **Come not ye**, addressed to Israel. **Gilgal**, the northern city by that name. **Beth-aven**, probably a sarcastic pun on "Beth-el," viz. "house of sin" for "house of God." **Nor swear**, etc.; not a prohibition of profanity, nor of taking oath by the name of Jehovah; for that was later inculcated; cf. Deut. 6: 13; 10: 20. Probably the phrase at *Beersheba* has dropped out because of its similarity in Hebrew to the word "swear"; cf. Am. 5: 5; 8: 14.

16. **Stubbornly**, *i.e.* has refused to be led or driven in Jehovah's way. **Now will the Lord feed them**, etc.; better, as a question implying the unreasonableness of such expectations,

17. Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.¹
 18. their drink is become sour:²
 They play the harlot continually;
 her rulers³ dearly love shame.⁴
 19. The wind hath wrapped her up in its wings;⁵
 and they shall be put to shame because of their
 sacrifices.⁶

VII. JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL, 5: 1-14

I. *Israel's Ignorance and Pride*, 5: 1-7

5. Hear this, O ye priests,
 and hearken, ye house of Israel,

¹ Gr. *he has made for himself stumbling-blocks*. Vg. *send him away*. ² m. *their carouse is over*. Gr. *he has chosen Canaanites*. Vg. *their banquet was separated*. Syr. omits the phrase. ³ Heb. *shields*. ⁴ m. *they are given up to love; her rulers are a shame*. Gr. *they loved shame from its wantonness*. Vg. *they loved to bear away the shame of its protectors*. Syr. *and they loved shame and fear*. ⁵ m. *skirts*. Gr. *a storm of wind art thou in her wings*. Syr. *the wind will howl in her wings*. ⁶ Gr., Syr., and Tg. *their altars*. m. *their altars shall be put to shame*.

viz. *now can Jehovah feed them*, etc.? Their conduct has made it impossible.

17. Israel's league is with alien gods, not with Jehovah. He is inseparably attached to them; it is useless to expend efforts to change his course. Idols are here the golden calves established by Jeroboam II as representative of Jehovah (cf. 8: 5), and other images connected with Baal worship.

18. The text of this vs. is in very bad condition; the Hebrew in its present form is practically untranslatable. The uncertainty is reflected in the renderings of the ancient versions. **Their drink is become sour**; this is a most unlikely rendering of the Hebrew and, furthermore, yields no sense here. The only possible translation of the Hebrew is, *their drunkenness has departed*. A slight change of text yields, *A company of sots!* They are devoted to wine and women. **Her rulers dearly love shame**; the literal Hebrew *shields* is used for "rulers" also in Ps. 47: 9; 89: 18. They have really lost all sense of shame.

19. Israel will be swept away to destruction as by a violent wind. **Because of their sacrifices**; better, with the versions, *and they shall be ashamed of their altars*. The disaster which Jehovah

And give ear, O house of the king,
 for unto you pertaineth¹ the judgement :
 For ye have been a snare at Mizpah,²
 and a net spread upon Tabor.

2. And the revolters are gone deep in making slaughter;³
 but I am a rebuker⁴ of them all.⁵

3. I know Ephraim,
 and Israel is not hid from me :
 For now, O Ephraim, thou hast played⁶ the harlot,
 Israel is defiled.

¹ m. *against you is.* ² Gr. and Vg. *in the watch.* ³ m. *(and the revolters are gone deep) in corruption.* Gr. *which those hunting the chase fixed fast.* Vg. *and victims thou hast turned down into depth.* ⁴ Heb. *a rebuke.* ⁵ Gr. *of you.* ⁶ Gr., Syr., and Vg. *Ephraim has played.*

will send will show the powerlessness of the religion practised at these altars.

1. Both religious and secular authorities are included with the nation as a whole, as being especially guilty. **To you;** probably addressed particularly to the last-mentioned class, the princes and courtiers. **The judgement;** not in the sense of a sentence of condemnation, but rather as meaning "the exercise of justice." The nobles are the ones especially responsible for the preservation of right. But instead of that they have been a **snare at Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor;** the figure is of huntsmen laying traps for the unwary and innocent. No reason is known for the express mention of **Mizpah and Tabor** here.

2. **And the revolters are gone deep in making slaughter;** better, with a correction of text, *and the pit of Shittim they have made deep.* That the Hebrew text has undergone corruption appears from the renderings of the versions and from the lack of meaning that it yields in this context. As corrected, the figure of the hunter is carried on. The *pit* was used for the capturing of large animals. **But I am a rebuker of them all;** better, with one slight change of text, *and there is no rebuke for any of them.* They sin with impunity.

3. Though Israel knows not Jehovah, he knows Israel through and through.

4. Their doings will not suffer them¹ to turn unto their God:
for the spirit of whoredom is within² them, and they know not the LORD.
5. And the pride³ of Israel doth testify⁴ to his face:
therefore Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in their iniquity;
Judah also shall stumble with them.
6. they shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD;
But they shall not find him;
he hath withdrawn himself from them.
7. They have dealt treacherously against the LORD:
for they have borne⁵ strange children:
Now shall the new moon⁶ devour them with their fields.⁷

¹ m. *they will not frame their doings.* ² m. *in the midst of.* ³ m. *the excellency.*
⁴ Gr., Syr. *shall be humbled.* ⁵ m. *together.* Gr. *have been begotten to them.* ⁶ m. *a month.* Gr. *mildew.* ⁷ Heb. *portions.*

4. They are so enmeshed in evil that they have no power to repent and seek Jehovah. **The spirit of whoredom** is here apparently the spirit of devotion to other gods. Hence it is impossible that they should properly **know the Lord**.

5. **The pride of Israel** is probably Israel's arrogant confidence in the all-sufficiency of its ritualistic worship of Jehovah. **Doth testify**; better *will testify, i.e.* will prove its falsity and emptiness in the coming time of trial. **Judah also**, etc.; these words are dropped as a gloss by some scholars, but without sufficient reason; cf. 4:15; 6:4.

6. No matter how persistent and abundant the sacrifices, they will be unable to obtain any response from Jehovah to their appeals. For their seeking will be actuated by false ideas and unworthy motives.

7. **Dealt treacherously**; have been unfaithful, disloyal. **Borne strange children**; the children do but follow in their fathers' steps; they have no place among those who have been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." **Now shall the new moon devour them**; the precise meaning here is very

2. *Ephraim's Downfall*, 5:8-14

8. Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah,¹
and the trumpet in Ramah:²
Sound an alarm at Beth-aven,³
behind thee, O Benjamin.⁴
9. Ephraim shall become a desolation in the day of
rebuke:
among the tribes of Israel have I made known that
which shall surely be.
10. The princes of Judah are like them that remove the
landmark:
I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

¹ Gr. upon the hills. ² Gr. upon the heights. ³ Gr. in the house of On. ⁴ m. After thee, Benjamin! Gr. Benjamin trembled. Vg. behind thy back, Benjamin.

uncertain. Perhaps, it may be interpreted as a threat that destruction may overtake them within a month. Or, it may refer to the practice of moon-worship in Israel and thus mean that this idolatry will but involve Israel in ruin. **With their fields**; *i.e.* the products of their fields.

8. A vivid announcement of approaching disaster at the hands of an enemy. The towns **Gibeah** and **Ramah** were, as their names indicate, located on heights, and hence fit places from which to sound the alarm. **Beth-aven** (= house of wickedness) is almost certainly a term of reproach used instead of Bethel (=house of God). Bethel was only about ten miles to the north of Jerusalem, while Ramah and Gibeah were right under the shadow of the southern capital. **Behind thee, O Benjamin**; if the text be correct, this is evidently some cry of alarm, or summons to flight. It is probable that we should follow the suggestion furnished by the Greek, and change the text slightly so as to read, *make Benjamin to tremble*. The disasters in the neighboring regions will terrify Benjamin.

9. **Become a desolation**; this was literally done in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians under Sargon. **Have I made known**; the prophet asserts the certainty of the coming judgment.

10. **The princes of Judah**; some scholars change *Judah* to *Israel* here and in the following verses, on the ground that Hosea concerned himself wholly with the North. But this seems of

11. Ephraim *is* oppressed,¹ he is crushed² in judgement,
because he was content³ to walk after the com-
mand.⁴
12. Therefore am I⁵ unto Ephraim as a moth,⁶
and to the house of Judah as rottenness.⁷
13. When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah *saw* his wound,⁸
Then went Ephraim to Assyria,
and sent⁹ to King Jareb:¹⁰
But he is not able to heal you,
neither shall he cure you of your wound.

¹ Gr. *Ephraim oppressed his opponent.* ² Gr. *he trampled down.* ³ Gr. *he began.*
⁴ Gr. and Syr. *after vanity.* Vg. *after filth.* ⁵ m. *And I was.* ⁶ Gr. *like confusion.*
⁷ Gr. *like a goad.* ⁸ Gr. *the pain.* Vg. *the bond.* ⁹ Gr. *sent elders.* ¹⁰ m. *a king*
that should contend. Gr. *King Jareim.* Vg. *the king, the avenger.*

doubtful validity, when we recall that the warning cry of vs. 8 was addressed to towns near the border of Judah and to Benjamin, a part of the Southern Kingdom. **Remove the landmark**; one of the crimes most reprehensible in the sight of the prophet's hearers. These marks indicated the extent of a person's property and were easily moved so as to increase the area of one man's land and decrease his neighbor's.

11. **Ephraim is oppressed**, etc.; the miseries that Israel already endures are easily accounted for. **Crushed in judgement**, *i.e.* the judgment of God, which has already begun to overtake the land. **Was content to**; better, *has deliberately*. **Walk after the command**; this is so ambiguous that it is probable the text is wrong. It is better to follow the Greek and Syriac rendering, *walked after vanity*, viz. the idol gods of Canaan.

12. **As a moth, as rottenness**; internal corruption and decay will but make the work of the foreign invader more easy. Israel and Judah were so closely related geographically, politically, economically, and socially that the disaster of one must be the disaster of both.

13. **Went Ephraim to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb**; realizing the desperate situation in which she is, Ephraim has tried to form an alliance with Assyria. No king Jareb is known. It is probable that, with a slight correction, we should read, *the great king*, a common designation of Assyria's rulers. No other testimony is at hand regarding any friendly relations between

14. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion,¹
 and as a young lion to the house of Judah :
 I, even I, will tear and go away ;
 I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver.

VIII. ISRAEL'S FACILE REPENTANCE AND INDELIBLE
 GUILT, 5:15-6:11

1. *Israel's Repentance*, 5:15-6:3

15. I will go and return to my place,
 till they acknowledge their offence,² and seek my
 face :
 In their affliction they will seek me earnestly.³
6. Come,⁴ and let us return unto the LORD:⁵
 For he hath torn, and he will heal us ;
 he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

¹ Gr. *panther*. ² m. *have borne their guilt*. Gr. *have disappeared* (i.e. have been destroyed). Vg. *you fail*. ³ m. adds *saying*; so also Gr., Syr., and Tg. ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *let us go*. ⁵ Gr. adds *our God*.

Assyria and Israel prior to 734 B.C. Hosea saw no possibility of aid in that direction. The prophets always inculcated reliance upon Jehovah rather than upon foreign help.

14. It is useless to seek aid from Assyria, since the source of Israel's trouble is Jehovah himself whose treatment of his people will be as destructive and irreparable as the lion's attack upon a flock.

15. **Acknowledge their offence**; better, following the versions, *become confounded*. Jehovah intends to leave Israel to itself. Then, realizing need of him, Israel will repent, confess its sins, and seek Jehovah. **Seek me earnestly**; better *seek me*. When in trouble, resort will be made to Jehovah for relief, a common human method of procedure.

1. **Come**, etc.; these words are best treated, with the versions, as belonging to the seekers of 5:15. **And he will heal us**; rather, *that he may heal us*. The punishment of Jehovah has been bestowed only that he may have the joy of forgiving Israel in response to its cries. **And he will bind**; rather, *that he may bind*, as in the foregoing phrase. Israel thus, in its very resolu-

2. After two days will he revive us: on¹ the third day he will raise us up,² and we shall live before him.
3. And let us know,
let us follow on to know the LORD;
his going forth³ is sure as the morning:
And he shall come unto us as the rain,
as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

2. *Jehovah's Resentment*, 6: 4-6

4. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?
O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?
For your goodness⁴ is as a morning cloud,
and as the dew that goeth early away.

¹ Syr. *and on*. ² Gr. *we shall stand up*. ³ Gr. *we shall find him*. ⁴ m. *kindness*.

tion to seek Jehovah, shows its utter inability to comprehend its own sinfulness or Jehovah's attitude toward it.

2. **After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up;** rather, *he will revive us after a couple of days, or on the third day. He will raise us up*, etc.; Israel looks upon her disasters as only temporary; Jehovah will soon restore her to the favor and prosperity she once enjoyed. **Live before him**, *i.e.* under his favoring eye.

3. **Let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord**, *i.e.* let us be persistent in our search for the knowledge of Jehovah. **His going forth is sure as the morning;** better, following the lead of the Greek, *we shall find him when we search for him*; it is an expression of the shallow assurance of Israel that Jehovah is waiting to gratify her wishes. **The rain;** the heavy winter rains. **Latter rain;** the later spring rains.

4. **O Ephraim**, etc.; a cry of despair; there is nothing that Jehovah can do that will avail; Ephraim is past help. **O Judah;** the Southern Kingdom comes in here again, as elsewhere, for a share of the prophet's attention. Many would change "Judah" here into "Israel"; but this is unnecessary. **For your goodness**, etc.; there is no depth to the piety of Israel; her penitence is too superficial; it has no abiding value. Hence, it makes no appeal to Jehovah.

5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets;¹
I have slain them by the words of my mouth:
and thy judgements² are as the light that goeth
forth.
6. For I desire goodness,³ and not sacrifice;
and the knowledge of God more than burnt
offerings.

3. *Israel's Guilt, 6: 7-11*

7. But they like Adam⁴ have transgressed⁵ the
covenant:⁶
there have they dealt treacherously against me.

¹ Gr. *I cut off your prophets.* ² Gr. and Syr. *my judgment.* ³ m. *kindness.* ⁴ m. *men.* ⁵ Gr. *who transgresses.* ⁶ m. *are as men that have transgressed a covenant.* Syr. *my covenant.*

5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; the prophets of early Israel consistently preached punishment and disaster (cf. Jer. 28: 8); through their work Jehovah was hewing Israel into shape, like a block of marble. I have slain them by the words of my mouth; an even stronger statement of the same thought. And thy judgements are as the light that goeth forth; the change of person is so abrupt here that it is better to translate with the versions, *and my judgment is like the light, which goes forth; i.e. both clear and unflinching.* No one will fail to see the punishment of Jehovah, the coming of which is as certain as the day.

6. The mistake of Israel was in thinking that Jehovah's primary interest was in sacrifice and ritual. He insists rather upon true piety, embracing love for both God and man. The first requisite is to know God as he is.

7. But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant; this is a very obscure statement, because there is no record of any "covenant" with Adam. Nor is it much better to translate *like men*, with the margin; for a statement that men acted "like men" does not add much weight. The word *there* in the following sentence seems to call for a place-name here. The nearest readings are *in Edom*, or *in Syria* or *in Admah*. But nothing is known of the specific occasion to which reference seems to be

8. Gilead ¹ is a city of them that work iniquity,
it is stained with blood.
9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man,²
so the company³ of priests murder in the way
toward Shechem:
yea they have committed lewdness.
10. In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing:
there whoredom is *found* in Ephraim,⁴ Israel is
defiled.
11. Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for
thee,⁵
when I bring again the captivity of my people.

¹ Gr. *there did Gilead despise me, a city working iniquity, stirring up waters.* ² m. *and as robbers lying in wait, so etc.* Gr. *and thy strength of a man (who is) a pirate.* Syr. *and thy strength like that of a man of bands.* Vg. *and like the throat of robber men.* ³ Gr. *they hid.* Syr. *they united.* ⁴ Syr. *Ephraim played the harlot.* ⁵ Gr. *begin to gather fruit for thyself.*

made. **Have they dealt treacherously against me, i.e.** they have been disloyal to Jehovah in that they worshipped other gods; or, by their sinful conduct, they have brought Jehovah into ill repute.

8. **Gilead is a city;** everywhere else it is a district; no such city is known. Nothing is known that warrants the charges preferred against Gilead here. But the records of Israelitish history are far from complete.

9. A very obscure verse, the precise translation and significance of which are wholly uncertain. Perhaps we should render, *and like bandits lying in wait is the gang of priests by the way; they murder at Shechem.* We lack the intimate knowledge of the situation necessary to make this intelligible. It is doubtful whether the text has been correctly transmitted. **Lewdness** is here, rather, crime in general.

10. **In the house of Israel;** probably to be corrected to *in Bethel*, an easy change. This furnishes the antecedent for the following **there**. **Whoredom is found in Ephraim;** to be corrected to *thou hast played the harlot, O Ephraim;* i.e. Israel has been untrue to Jehovah. The worship of the calves at Bethel and Dan was strongly objected to by Hosea.

11. **Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for thee;** the punishment availing for Israel will also fall upon Judah. This

IX. THE DEEP-SEATED CORRUPTION OF ISRAEL, 7:1-7

7. When I would heal Israel,¹
 then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered, and
 the wickedness of Samaria;
 For they commit falsehood:²
 and the thief entereth in,³
 and the troop of robbers⁴ spoileth⁵ without.
2. And they consider not in their hearts⁶
 that I remember all their wickedness:
 Now have their own doings beset them about;
 they are before my face.
3. They make the king⁷ glad with their wickedness,
 and the princes with their lies.⁸

¹ Gr. joins this phrase with 6: 11. ² Syr. adds *before me*. ³ Gr. adds *to him*, which seems to be an error for *to the house*. ⁴ Gr. *the robber*. ⁵ m. *maketh a raid*.
⁶ Gr. joins with vs. 2 and renders, *in order that they may sing with, like those singing with their heart*. ⁷ Gr., Syr. *Kings*. ⁸ Syr. *kings glad with their wickedness and their lies; their princes are all adulterers*.

is probably a note added by a late editor who realized that the sins for which Samaria fell were found also in Judah and merited a like punishment. **When I bring again the captivity of my people**; if this be the right rendering, the Exile is presupposed as an existing fact and the line must be thought of as of exilic or post-exilic origin. It may be rendered *when I would change the fortune of my people*, in which case it might belong to Hosea, but would have to be joined to 7:1 rather than 6:11.

1. Jehovah's desire to forgive and bless Israel is frustrated by her wickedness, which ever thrusts itself upon his attention. **Falsehood** is fraud and corruption of many kinds. Burglary and highway robbery are common occurrences.

2. Israel cannot escape the result of its ill doing, for it is never out of Jehovah's sight.

3. **They make the king glad**, etc.; the rulers are delighted with the results that accrue to them through the craft and tyranny of their subordinates. There may be allusion here to some special occasion of drunkenness and debauchery, which is further described in vs. 4.

4. They are all adulterers :
 they are as an oven heated by the baker ;¹
 He ceaseth ² to stir *the fire*,³
 from the kneading of the dough until it be
 leavened.⁴
5. On the day of our king the princes made them-
 selves⁵ sick with the heat⁶ of wine :
 he stretched out his hand ⁷ with scorners.
6. For they have made ready ⁸ their heart like an
 oven, whiles they lie in wait : ⁹
 their baker ¹⁰ sleepeth all the night ;
 In the morning it burneth ¹¹ as a flaming fire.

¹ Gr. oven burning for cooking. ² Gr. of burning. ³ Gr. from the flame. Syr. from the city. Vg. the state ceases gradually. ⁴ Vg. from the mixing of the ferment until it be all fermented. Syr. one kneading dough until it be leavened. ⁵ m. him. ⁶ Gr. the days of our kings the rulers began to be heated; similarly Syr. and Vg. ⁷ Syr. they stretched out their hands. ⁸ m., Heb. brought near. Vg. they have applied. Gr. their hearts burned. ⁹ Gr. in breaking them in pieces, which is joined with the following phrase. Vg. when he shall lie in wait for them. ¹⁰ Syr. and Tg. their anger. Gr. Ephraim. ¹¹ Gr. early it came to pass, it burned.

4. They are all adulterers, viz. king, princes, and people. They are as an oven, etc.; better, *they are like a burning oven whose baker ceased to stir up the flame from the kneading of the dough until its leavening*. This is a characterization of the fires of passion, the precise point of which it is not possible to state positively.

5. On the day of our king; some special festive occasion, which cannot be definitely placed now, though doubtless well known to the prophet's hearers. The princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine; the marginal rendering *made him sick* is attractive; reference is perhaps made to the murder of King Zechariah, in the midst of a drunken carousal. He stretched out his hand; the exact meaning of these words is unknown.

6. For they have made ready their heart; this translation is out of the question; nor is the Hebrew susceptible of a rendering that yields good sense. It is better to follow the Greek and read *their hearts burn*. Whiles they lie in wait; better, *with their plotting*. Their baker; this yields no satisfactory meaning; hence we must read, with the Syriac and Targum, *their anger*. Their wrath and treachery smoulder all night long to burst forth into flames in the morning.

7. They are all hot as an oven,
and devour their judges;
All their kings are fallen:
there is none among them that calleth unto me.

X. ISRAEL'S DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH, 7: 8-16

8. Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the ¹ peoples;
Ephraim is a cake ² not turned.
9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he
knoweth *it* not:
yea, gray hairs are here and there ³ upon him, and he
knoweth *it* not.

¹ Gr. *his*. ² Gr. and Vg. *a loaf baked in the ashes*. ³ Heb. *sprinkled*. Gr. *have blossomed forth*. Vg. *are poured forth*. Syr. *are come forth*.

7. A figurative characterization of the spirit of the times. Following Jeroboam, six kings reigned within approximately twenty years, some of them but a few months, and four of them were slain as a result of conspiracy and revolt. **There is none among them**, etc.; none know how to reach the heart of Jehovah. They are, in the prophet's judgment, wilfully blind to the things that make for purity and justice.

8. **Ephraim, he mixeth himself**, *i.e.* he associates with and seeks help from foreign peoples, a procedure that can only bring irretrievable ruin. **A cake not turned**, *i.e.* burned on the side next the fire, but dough on the other side. There is no consistency of character in the life of Israel. No deep-seated principles control the national policies, but a facile opportunism which is ready to turn in a new direction at a moment's notice.

9. **Strangers**, *i.e.* the foreign nations upon whom Israel has depended. They have grown strong at the expense of Israel. **His strength**; his resources of every kind. **He knoweth it not**; he is unconscious of the steady drain which is sapping his vitality. The personification of Israel as a man growing weaker and weaker is now carried one step further. **Gray hairs**; he has already begun to manifest evidences of the weakness of old age. **Are here and there**; better, *are sprinkled*, as in the Hebrew.

10. And the pride¹ of Israel doth testify² to his face :
 yet they have not returned unto the LORD their
 God, nor sought him, for all this.³
11. And Ephraim is like a silly dove, without under-
 standing :⁴
 they call⁵ unto Egypt, they go to Assyria.
12. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon
 them ;
 I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven :
 I will chastise them, as their congregation hath
 heard.⁶
13. Woe unto them ! for they have wandered from me ;
 destruction⁷ unto them ! for they have trespassed
 against me :
 Though I would redeem them,
 yet they have spoken lies against me.

¹ m. *excellency*. ² Gr., Syr., and Vg. *shall be humbled*. ³ Gr. and Vg. *in all these*.
 Syr. omits the phrase. ⁴ Heb. *heart*. ⁵ Syr. *they come*. ⁶ m. *when the report cometh
 to their congregation*. Gr. *in the report of their tribulation*. Syr. *according to the report
 of their testimony*. ⁷ Gr. *miserable are they*.

10. **The pride of Israel**; the arrogance which has kept Israel from acknowledging its error and turning to Jehovah. **Doth testify to his face**; the course of events is making the folly of Israel's policy clear to every one. The present helpless state of the nation is convincing evidence. **Yet they have not returned unto the Lord**, etc.; the crowning proof of their obstinacy and folly.

11. The **dove** was celebrated in antiquity for its simple and unsuspecting nature. So Ephraim flits back and forth between **Egypt and Assyria**, blind to the dangers that threaten from both alike.

12. **I will spread my net**; the figure of the dove continues. Israel is to be caught in the snare of Jehovah, who will thus show the nation its powerlessness. **As their congregation hath heard**; these words are meaningless; nor is any one of the corrections that have been proposed for the present Hebrew text at all satisfactory.

13. **Wandered from me**, viz. to find aid in Egypt or Assyria. **Trespassed**, or *rebelled*. **Though I would redeem them, yet, etc.**;

14. And they have not cried unto me with their heart,¹
 but they howl upon their beds:
 They assemble themselves² for corn and wine,
 they rebel³ against me.
15. Though I have taught⁴ and strengthened their
 arms,
 yet do they imagine mischief against me.
16. They return, but not to *him that is on high*;⁵
 they are like a deceitful⁶ bow:
 Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage⁷
 of their tongue:
 this shall be their derision⁸ in the land of Egypt.

¹ Gr. *their hearts have not cried to me.* Syr. *with all their heart.* ² Gr. *they cut themselves.* Vg. *they were ruminating.* Syr. *they were striving.* ³ Syr. *and they rebel.* Gr. *they were trained.* ⁴ m. *chastened them.* Gr. omits. ⁵ Gr. and Syr. *return unto nothing.* Vg. *turn in order that they might be without a yoke.* ⁶ Gr. *a strung.* ⁷ Gr. *coarseness.* ⁸ Gr. *depreciation.* Tg. *works.* Syr. *entanglement.*

better, and shall I redeem them, when they etc.? It is unreasonable to expect help from Jehovah when all that they do and say shows misrepresentation and wrong conception of Jehovah.

14. **Not cried unto me with their heart**; their appeals to Jehovah have been only half-hearted and insincere. **Upon their beds**; a slight change of text yields the more appropriate sense, *beside their altars.* **They assemble themselves**; better, with the Greek, *they cut themselves*, i.e. in their eagerness **for corn and wine**, they inflict wounds upon themselves in the hope that the blood running down from their bodies upon the altar will constitute an irresistible appeal to Jehovah, leading him to grant what they desire; cf. I Kings 17:27, 28. **They rebel against me**; notwithstanding all their zeal in sacrifices and offerings, they stubbornly refuse to listen to the words of Jehovah through his prophets.

15. **Though I have taught** (i.e. trained) **and strengthened their arms**; Jehovah has exercised a parent's watchcare over Israel, but to no purpose so far as securing filial affection and obedience are concerned.

16. **They return, but not to him that is on high**; this is a most unlikely rendering of the Hebrew text. The best rendering is *they turn, not upwards*; but even this is unlikely and yields unsatisfactory sense. Perhaps, we should correct the text so as to read, *they turn to the Baalim.* **Like a deceitful bow**; one that

XI. ISRAEL'S RULERS, GODS, AND POLICIES ARE HOSTILE TO JEHOVAH, 8: 1-14

1. *Israel's Punishment is Close at Hand*, 8: 1-3

8. *Set the trumpet to thy mouth.*¹

As an eagle *he cometh* against the house of the
LORD:²

Because they have transgressed my covenant,
and trespassed against my law.

2. They shall cry unto me,³
my God,⁴ we Israel⁵ know thee.

¹ Syr. *thy mouth is like a trumpet*. Gr. *into their bosom like earth*. ² m. *The trumpet to thy mouth!* As an eagle against the house of the Lord! ³ Syr. adds, *and say*. ⁴ Syr. *our God*. Gr. *God*. ⁵ Gr. and Syr. omit.

cannot be depended upon to send the arrow to its mark. **Their princes**, the leaders in Israel's rebellious policies, **shall fall by the sword**, viz. that of the Assyrian army in all probability, **for the rage**, or insolence, **of their tongue**, in that they have spoken against the policy of trusting only in Jehovah and have sought help in foreign lands. **This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt**; while they depend upon Egypt for aid and deliverance from all danger, disaster will befall them and Egypt will accord them only contempt.

1. **Set the trumpet**, etc.; the margin's rendering exactly represents the Hebrew text. Apparently it is a call to arms or to flight, because of the immediate approach of the enemy. **Eagle** is rather, *vulture*, swooping down upon Israel as his prey. **House of the Lord**, i.e. not the temple, but the land of Israel; cf. 9: 15 and the regular Assyrian title for the land of Israel, viz. house of Omri. **Transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law**; reference is made to the covenant at Sinai between Israel and Jehovah and to such laws as are contained in the Covenant Code (Ex. 20: 23-23: 33) and are reflected in the teachings of the prophets.

2. **They shall cry**, in the coming day of disaster. **Unto me**; not to the Baalim, whose aid will then be recognized as of no avail. **My God, we Israel know thee**; they will then urge an intimate acquaintance and fellowship with Jehovah as ground for his intervention in their behalf.

3. Israel ¹ hath cast off that which is good :
the enemy shall pursue him.²
2. *The Rulers and the Golden Calves are doomed to Destruction, 8 : 4-6*
4. They have set up kings, but not by me ;
they have made princes,³ and I knew it not : ⁴
Of their silver and their gold have they made them
idols,⁵
that they may be cut off.
5. He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria ;
mine anger is kindled against them :
How long will it be ere they attain to innocency ? ⁶

¹ Gr. *Because Israel.* ² Gr. *they pursued an enemy.* ³ m. *they have removed them.* Gr. *they ruled.* ⁴ Gr. *and they did not know me.* ⁵ Gr. *Get rid of.* Vg. *thy calf is cast forth.* Syr. *they have loathed.* ⁶ Gr. *until when will they be unable to be cleansed in Israel?* Similarly Vg. and Syr.

3. **Israel hath cast off**, etc.; Israel's past conduct belies his present words. He has steadfastly rejected everything making for better and higher life. Therefore, **the enemy shall pursue him**; Jehovah will use the army of the foreigner to execute his will regarding Israel.

4. **Set up kings, but not by me**; reference is probably made to the series of revolts, conspiracies and usurpations of the throne that set in upon the death of Jeroboam II, upon none of which did the approval of Jehovah rest, according to Hosea. **I knew it not**; better, *I knew them not*; i.e. I did not indorse them. **Idols**; probably the golden calves of Bethel and Dan are here denounced. These were images of Jehovah, and Hosea is the first prophet to protest against the making of such images. **That they may be cut off**, i.e. with the result that they will be cut off; a case of result conceived of as purpose, a common Hebrew usage.

5. **He hath cast off thy calf**; this use of the third person is difficult, being preceded and followed by the first person. We should probably make a slight correction to the first person, and translate *I abhor thy calf*. **O Samaria**; probably, the name here denotes the country at large, though calves may have been installed in Samaria and other towns, besides Bethel and Dan.

6. For from Israel is even ¹ this ;
 The workman made it, and it is no God :
 yea, the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.²
3. *Israel's Foreign Policy is Ruinous, 8 : 7-10*
7. For they sow the wind,
 and they shall reap the whirlwind :³
 He hath no standing corn ;
 the blade shall yield no meal ;⁴
 If so be it yield,
 strangers shall swallow it up.
8. Israel is swallowed up :
 now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein
 is no pleasure.⁵

¹ Syr. omits. ² Gr. *because wandering was thy calf, O Samaria. Vg. shall be in spiders' webs. Syr. is not thy calf for error, O Samaria?* ³ Gr. *their end will receive them.* ⁴ m. *it hath no stalk; the blade, etc. Gr. a sheaf did not have strength to yield fine meal.* ⁵ Gr. *useless. Vg. unclean.*

How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? Better, for how long? They cannot remain unpunished.

6. A denunciation of the calves as of wholly human and artificial origin, hence not to be credited with divine power. Indeed, their powerlessness will be shown by their total destruction; they will be shattered to fragments.

7. Wind is nothingness and emptiness as found in Israel's policies. Whirlwind is the destruction that such futile policies involve. **He hath no standing corn; the blade shall yield no meal;** better translated, *a stalk which has no growth, which yields no meal.* The figure is now changed from Israel as the sower to Israel as that which is sown. The nation is a blasted plant, which can produce nothing. If by any chance it should yield, **strangers shall swallow it up.** The resources of Israel are sure to be devoured by foreign powers.

8. **Israel is swallowed up,** etc.; the process has already begun; Israel is even now losing its identity through absorption by the nations. She has ceased to be a force to be reckoned with in the politics of Western Asia.

9. For they are gone up to Assyria,
like a wild ass alone by himself:¹
 Ephraim hath hired lovers.²
20. Yea, though³ they hire⁴ among the nations,
 Now⁵ will I gather them;
 and they begin⁶ to be minished⁷ by reason of the
 burden⁸ of the king of princes.⁹
4. *Israel's Worship is Unacceptable to Jehovah, 8: 11-14*
11. Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars to sin,
 altars have been unto him to sin.¹⁰

¹ Gr. *Ephraim has blossomed according to itself.* ² Gr. *they have loved gifts.* Vg. *they have given rewards to their lovers.* Syr. *loves a gift.* ³ Gr. *because of this.* ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *they be delivered over.* ⁵ Syr. omits. ⁶ Gr. *they shall cease.* Vg. and Syr. *they shall rest.* ⁷ m. *they shall sorrow a little, or for a little while;* Heb. *a little.* ⁸ Gr. *from anointing.* ⁹ Gr., Syr., Vg., and Tg., *king and princes.* ¹⁰ Gr. *hath multiplied altars, for sins have the beloved altars been to him.* Syr. *unto him for great sin.*

9. Are gone up to Assyria, *i.e.* for help. Like a wild ass alone by himself; these animals usually went in droves; thus Israel's conduct is unusual. It may be that reference is made to Israel's having refused to coöperate with other peoples in resisting invasion and having been the only one to have recourse to Assyria. Or more probably, the reference is to a wild ass wandering in search of a mate, as appears from the following phrase. **Ephraim hath hired lovers**; the figure of an unfaithful wife is taken up again here as in chaps 1-3. Ephraim has been untrue to Jehovah in seeking love among the peoples of foreign gods. It is tempting to suppose an easy error in the text here and to read instead of it, a phrase parallel to the preceding mention of Assyria, *viz. to Egypt they give love-gifts.*

10. **Though they hire among the nations, now will I gather them**; Israel wandering among the nations in search of support will be brought back by Jehovah, but only that he may send her into exile. **And they begin to be minished**, etc.; better, following the Greek, *and they shall cease for a little from anointing kings and princes, i.e.* into exile they are to go where there will be no occasion for changes of dynasty.

11. Another phase of Israel's guilt now is taken up. We must translate, with the Greek, *because Ephraim has multiplied altars, altars have become sin for him; i.e.* Israel has put its confidence in

12. Though I¹ write for him my law in ten thousand
precepts;²
 they³ are counted as a strange thing.⁴
13. As for the sacrifices of mine offerings,⁵ they sacrifice
 flesh and eat it;
 but⁶ the LORD accepteth them not:
 Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit
 their sins;
 they shall return to Egypt.⁷

¹ Syr. *and I*. ² Gr. *I will write down for him an abundance, and my laws were etc. Vg. my multifold laws*. ³ m. *I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law, but they etc.* ⁴ Syr. *he reckoned them as foreign, my words*. ⁵ Gr. *the beloved altars, which is joined with vs. 12. Vg. they offer sacrifices*. Syr. *my choice sacrifices*. ⁶ Gr. *because if they sacrifice a sacrifice and eat flesh, the Lord, etc.* ⁷ Gr. *adds, and eat unclean things among the Assyrians*.

the effectiveness and validity of its ritualistic worship and has neglected the weightier matters of the law; hence the worship itself is a sin.

12. **Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts**; better rendered, *though I should write for him myriads of my laws*. Perhaps there is reference here to the tradition that Jehovah himself wrote the decalogue. In any case, the thought is that even if Israel possessed innumerable laws written by Jehovah himself, *they would be reckoned as those of a foreigner*, a better rendering than that of the text. Israel would ignore them just as the real significance of Jehovah's existing laws is lost sight of.

13. **As for the sacrifices of mine offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it**; these words are very difficult and obscure. Perhaps the original text read, *they love sacrifices and they sacrifice flesh and eat*. The point of such a charge is that in the observance of the sacrificial ritual, the Israelites are ministering to the satisfaction of their own appetites rather than to the honor of Jehovah. Therefore, **the Lord accepteth them not**. On the contrary, their sin calls insistently for punishment. Hence, **they shall return to Egypt**. Hosea means either that Israel will again go into captivity as she once was in Egypt, or that she will again go to Egypt itself as captive. The earlier prophets of the eighth century B.C. were not apparently quite certain as to Israel's fate, whether it was to be brought about by Assyria or by Egypt; cf. 9:3; Isa. 7:18.

14. For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and builded palaces; ¹
 and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities:
 But I will send a fire upon his cities,
 and it shall devour the castles ² thereof.

XII. ISRAEL DESERTING JEHOVAH AND DESERTED BY
 JEHOVAH, 9: 1-17

1. *Israel's Unfaithfulness to be punished by Exile*, 9: 1-9
9. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, ³ like the peoples;
 for ⁴ thou hast gone a whoring from thy God,
 Thou hast loved hire upon ⁵ every cornfloor. ⁶
2. The threshing-floor and the winepress shall not feed ⁷
 them,
 and the new wine shall fail her. ⁸

¹ m. *temples*. Gr. *groves*. ² m. *palaces*. Gr. *their foundations*. ³ m. *unto exultation*. Gr. *do not exult*; similarly Vg., Syr. and Tg. ⁴ m. *that*. ⁵ Syr. *from*. ⁶ Syr. omits *corn*. ⁷ Gr. *know*. Syr. *satisfy*. ⁸ Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. *them*.

14. This verse describes the sin of Israel as a failure to depend wholly upon Jehovah for support, which is manifested in the policy of multiplying fortifications as the nations around her have done. The latter half of the verse is evidently borrowed from Am. 1: 4-2: 5, where it occurs as the repeated refrain. It is not unlikely that the whole of vs. 14 is a note added by an editor.

1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, like the peoples; better, with a slight change of text, *rejoice not, O Israel; exult not, like*, etc. Probably these words were spoken in connection with some festal ceremony, such as the Harvest Feast. Israel, having forsaken its God, has even less ground for rejoicing than the nations, for they are true to their own gods, at least. **Thou hast loved hire upon every cornfloor**; the products of the soil have been accepted as gifts from the Baalim whom they worship.

2. But Jehovah, the real giver of these blessings, will withhold them henceforth; cf. 2: 8, 9.

3. They shall not dwell¹ in the LORD's land ;
but Ephraim shall return² to Egypt,
and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.
4. They shall not pour out wine *offerings* to the LORD,
neither shall they be pleasing unto him :
Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread³ of
mourners ;⁴
all that eat thereof shall be polluted :
For their bread shall be for their appetite ;
it shall not come into the house of the LORD.
5. What will ye do in the day⁵ of solemn assembly,
and in the day of the feast of the LORD ?

¹ Gr. *did not dwell*. ² Gr. *dwelt*. ³ m. *neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto him; their bread shall be unto them as the bread*. ⁴ Syr. *of affliction*. ⁵ Gr. *days*.

3. Ephraim shall return to Egypt; cf. 8 : 13. **And they shall eat unclean food in Assyria**; food not prepared in accordance with Hebrew dietary laws and the product of a land acknowledging the sway of other gods than Jehovah, and consequently itself unclean.

4. **They shall not pour out wine offerings to the Lord**; either because there will be no wine to pour out, or because in the land of the conqueror the pouring of libations to Jehovah will be prohibited. For wine-drinking in connection with worship, cf. 1 Sam. 1 : 24; 10 : 3; Am. 2 : 8. **Neither shall they be pleasing unto him**, etc.; by a different grouping of the words and a couple of slight changes in the text, we secure the better reading, *neither will they arrange sacrifices for him; their bread will be like the bread of mourning*. Drink offerings and food offerings to Jehovah will be alike discontinued. Their food will all be unclean (cf. Jer. 16 : 7; Deut. 26 : 14) and will render unclean all who eat of it. **Their bread shall be for their appetite; it shall not come into the house of the Lord**; eating, which normally always had religious significance, will now lose all of this and become a mere process of satisfying the cravings of the physical nature.

5. **What will ye do**, etc.; the celebration of the great festal days will be impossible in a land that is not Jehovah's. The great joyous occasions will all cease, becoming nothing but a sad memory of better times.

6. For, lo, they are gone away from¹ destruction,
yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall
bury them:

Their pleasant things² of silver, nettles³ shall possess them:⁴

thorns shall be in their tents.

7. The days of visitation are come,
the days of recompence are come;
Israel shall know it:⁵

The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit
is mad,

for the multitude of thine iniquity, and because
the enmity is great.⁶

¹ Syr. *gone into*. ² Gr. *Michmash*. ³ Gr. *destruction*. Syr. *the foreigner*. ⁴ Gr. *it*.
⁵ Gr. *shall be ill-treated*. ⁶ Gr. *by reason of the multitude of thy sins thy madness is fulfilled*.
Syr. *on account of the multitude of thy wickedness, thy wantonness is increased*.
Vg. *for the multitude of thine iniquity and the multitude of folly*.

6. For, lo, they are gone away from destruction; this seems to say exactly the opposite of the facts in the case. It is much better to suppose a slight error in the text and correct to *they shall go to Assyria*, which is balanced by *Egypt shall gather them up*, just as in 9:3; cf. 7:16 and 8:13. *Memphis shall bury them*; Memphis is mentioned as one of the most important cities of Egypt and as the site of extensive burial-grounds. The sojourn in Egypt will not be of short duration, but for life. *Their pleasant things*, etc.; the scenes of their former wealth and splendor will be given up to desolation and ruin.

7. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; the prophet is certain of the truth of his message; Israel's past sins are now to receive their full measure of punishment. *Israel shall know it*; she will at last realize the meaning of the harsh experiences through which she has to pass. *The prophet is a fool*; the man that hath the spirit is mad; this is best considered as a remark or opinion of the people regarding Hosea and prophets of his point of view. To this Hosea makes answer, admitting that appearances are against him, but laying the responsibility for the character of his utterances upon the people themselves; *for the multitude of thine iniquity and because the enmity is great*. This is enough to distract any good man, let alone a prophet.

8. Ephraim *was* a watchman with¹ my² God :
 as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his
 ways,
and enmity in the house of his God.
9. They have deeply corrupted themselves,³ as in the
 days of Gibeah :⁴
 he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their
 sins.
2. *The Exceeding Sinfulness and Utter Rejection of Israel,*
 9 : 10-17
10. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness ;
 I saw your⁵ fathers as the firstripe⁶ in the fig
 tree at her first season :⁷

¹ m. *watcheth against.* ² Gr. omits *my.* ³ Gr. connecting with vs. 8, *they planted folly firmly in the house of God, they perished, etc.* ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *of the hill.* ⁵ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *their.* ⁶ Gr. *a watchman.* ⁷ Syr. omits *at her first season.*

8. Ephraim was a watchman with my God ; as for the prophet, etc. ; this verse is one of the most obscure in the book of Hosea. We might render, *Ephraim's watchman with my god — namely, the prophet — a fowler's snare, etc.* But that is extremely involved and calls for a slight change of text. The simplest rendering of the text as it stands is, *Ephraim is a watchman with my God, a prophet ; a fowler's snare is upon all his ways, etc.* ; but this yields no fitting meaning. As simple a change of text as any gives us, *A spy is Ephraim, the people of my God ; as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is upon all his ways.* That is, instead of being met with sympathy and coöperation, the prophet finds the whole people suspicious of him and setting traps to catch him. **And enmity in the house of his God,** the word "enmity" is best treated as a mistaken repetition from the end of v. 7. "House of his God" means the land of Israel, as in 8 : 1, and is to be connected with vs. 9.

9. They have deeply corrupted themselves ; better, with a slight change of text and joined to vs. 8, *in the house of his God, they have digged a deep pit.* This is parallel to a fowler's snare is in all his ways and means the same thing. As in the days of Gibeah ; the only known episode to which reference can be made

But they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated¹ themselves unto the shameful thing;² and became abominable like that which they loved.³

11. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird:

there shall be no birth, and none with child, and no conception.

12. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there be not a man left:⁴

yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!⁵

¹ m. separated. ² Heb. to shame. ³ Gr. like the loved ones. ⁴ Gr. they shall be made childless from men. ⁵ Gr. them, my flesh from them. Syr. when I take vengeance upon them.

is that recorded in Judg. 19, and that case has no especial bearing upon this. **He will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins**; repeated from 8:13.

10. **Like grapes in the wilderness**; an object of delight. **The firstripe in the fig tree at her first season**; evidently a much esteemed delicacy. **They came to Baal-peor**; probably the same as Beth-peor, the full name of which may have been Beth-baal-peor; cf. Numb. 23:28; 25:3, 5; 31:16; Deut. 3:29; 4:46. **And consecrated themselves unto**, set themselves apart religiously to the service of, **the shameful thing**, or as in Hebrew, *shame*. This is probably a later substitute for *Baal* which stood here originally; cf. Ish-baal and its later equivalent, Ish-bosheth (*i.e.* shame), Merib-baal and Mephibosheth. **And became abominable**; literally, *abominations*, a term commonly applied to foreign gods, idols, and unclean objects.

11. Swift and sudden destruction will befall Israel. The propagation of the nation will cease; there will be no new generations born.

12. If by any chance they should rear more children, Jehovah will bring total bereavement upon them. **Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them**; failing to realize what Jehovah's favor has meant to them, he will open their blind eyes by deserting them altogether and leaving them to the tender mercies of the powerless gods they have been serving.

13. Ephraim, like as I have seen Tyre, is planted in a pleasant place:¹
but Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer.²
14. Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give?
give them³ a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.
15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them,
because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house:
I will love them no more;
all their princes are revolvers.
16. Ephraim is smitten,⁴ their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit:

¹ m. as I have seen, is like Tyre that is planted, etc. Gr. Ephraim, as I saw, set their children for a prey. Syr. Ephraim, as thou hast seen Tyre, is planted in its buildings. Vg. Ephraim, as I saw, Tyre was founded in beauty. ² Gr. to slaughter. ³ Gr. omits give them. ⁴ Gr. has suffered.

13. Ephraim, like as I have seen Tyre, is planted in a pleasant place; the difficulty and uncertainty of this sentence is attested by the widely variant renderings offered by the versions. A more probable textual reading yields, *As for Ephraim, they will set its children as a prey.* This makes excellent connection between vs. 12 and vs. 13b. Ephraim shall bring out his children to the slayer; it was a common practice when cities were captured for the victors to slay both women and children; cf. 3:10; 10:14; 13:16; Isa. 13:16; Ps. 137:9.

14. Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? etc.; Hosea entreats Jehovah to bring upon Israel the curse of childlessness, which after all is a lesser evil than to bear children only to see them dashed in pieces by a ruthless foe.

15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them; no reason is known for the singling out of Gilgal as the concentration of Ephraim's sin and the primal cause of Jehovah's displeasure; but cf. 4:15; 12:11; Numb. 4:4; 5:5. My house; the land of Palestine as in 8:1. I will love them no more; not necessarily "never again," but rather, "no longer." All their princes are revolvers; viz. from Jehovah, their God.

16. This vs. is more in keeping with the thought of vss. 11-14

yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb.

17. My¹ God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him:
and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

XIII. THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL'S ALTARS AND IDOLS, 10: 1-8

10. Israel is a luxuriant vine,²
which putteth forth his fruit:
According to the abundance of his fruit he hath multiplied his altars;
according to the goodness³ of his land they have made goodly⁴ pillars.⁴

¹ Gr. omits. ² Gr. *the fruit flourishing*. ³ m. *prosperity*. ⁴ Gr. *he built*. ⁴ m. *obelisks*.

than with that of 15 and 17. It is probably misplaced here. Ephraim is smitten; their root is dried up; the figure is that of a tree smitten by drought so that it can bear no fruit. Though they bring forth; if such a thing were possible; cf. 8: 7. Yet will I slay the beloved fruit of their womb; cf. vs. 12.

17. My God; Hosea now speaks in his own person. His use of "my" in itself reflects his conviction that Ephraim has no claim upon Jehovah. Will cast them away; viz. into exile. Because they did not hearken unto him; but have rebelliously rejected the entreaties of his prophets. They shall be wanderers among the nations; just as they have wandered away from Jehovah (7: 13), so now shall they wander as exiles among the peoples to whom they have looked for help instead of trusting in their God.

1. The days of Jeroboam II, in whose reign Hosea began his work, were characterized by great prosperity in Israel. Hence the figure of the luxuriant vine, which putteth forth his fruit. In recognition of this prosperity Israel had erected numerous altars and greatly increased the number of its pillars. These were apparently used in the service of the Baalim, who were looked upon as the givers of the fruits of the soil. The pillars were solitary upright stones erected at sanctuaries in honor

2. Their heart is divided;¹ now shall they be found guilty:²
 He shall smite³ their altars,
 he shall spoil their pillars.⁴
3. Surely now shall they say,
 we have no king:
 For we fear not Jehovah;
 and the king, what can he do for us?
4. They speak⁵ *vain* words,
 swearing⁶ falsely in making covenants:⁷
 Therefore judgement springeth⁸ up as hemlock⁹
 in the furrows of the field.¹⁰

¹ m. *he hath divided their heart*; or, *their heart is smooth*. Gr. *they divided their hearts*. ² Gr. *they be destroyed*. Vg. *shall they perish*. ³ Gr. *utterly destroy*. ⁴ m. *obelisks*. Gr. *their pillars shall be destroyed*. ⁵ Gr. *speaking* (which agrees with *king of vs. 3*). ⁶ Gr. *pretexis*. Vg. *of vision*. ⁷ m. *they swear falsely; they make covenants*. ⁸ m. *shall spring*. ⁹ Gr. *grass*. Syr. *briars*. ¹⁰ Syr. *in a field of untilled land*; similarly Gr.

of some god. They were commonly used by both Canaanites and Israelites.

2. **Their heart is divided**; viz. between the Baalim and Jehovah. **Now shall they be found guilty**; better, *be confounded*. **He shall smite**; Jehovah will bring ruin upon the pillars and altars erected in honor of the Baalim.

3. **Now shall they say**; perhaps rather, *do they say* introducing a description of the current state of mind. **We have no king**; perhaps a reflection upon the frequent changes in the kingship that set in after the death of Jeroboam II; or even an expression of hostility toward the kingship, in that the monarch is declared of no value to his people. **For we fear not Jehovah**; this looks like a judgment regarding Israel's religion by some later writer. It is hardly conceivable that the contemporaries of Hosea could be justly charged with indifference toward or repudiation of Jehovah. Their failure was rather in not giving him their whole allegiance and in not understanding, and accepting the standards of social justice upon which he insisted. **And the king, what can he do for us?** He is helpless and useless.

4. **They speak vain words**; words that mean nothing, hollow and insincere. **Swearing falsely in making covenants**; better, *they swear to falsehood; they make bargains*; they lie and cheat

5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror¹
for the calves² of Beth-aven:³
For the people thereof shall mourn over it,
and the priests thereof⁴ that rejoiced over it,
for the glory thereof, because it is departed from
it.
6. It shall also be carried⁵ unto Assyria
for a present to king Jareb.⁶
Ephraim shall receive shame,⁷
and Israel shall be put to shame because of his
own counsel.
7. *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off,⁸
as foam⁹ upon the water.

¹ Gr. and Syr. *shall dwell*. Vg. and Tg. *shall worship*. ² Gr. and Syr. *calf*. ³ Gr. *the house of On*. ⁴ Gr. *as they provoked him*. ⁵ Gr. *those binding it carried*. ⁶ Gr. *the King Jareim*. Vg. *the king, the avenger*. ⁷ Gr. *in a gift*. Vg. *shame will seize Ephraim*. ⁸ m. *Samaria is cut off with her king*. Gr. *Samaria cast off her king*. Vg. *Samaria made her king to pass over*. ⁹ m. *twigs*. Gr. *a chip*.

in all their dealings. **Therefore judgement**; evidently in the sense of punishment. **Springeth up**; better, with m., *shall spring up*. **As hemlock**; some poisonous weed, not necessarily "hemlock." Disasters are to befall Israel from every quarter, multiplying like noxious weeds.

5. **The calves of Beth-aven**; (better in singular, *calf*) which should be, if it were a real god, a source of strength and courage to Israel, will be instead an occasion for anxiety and fear, being totally incapable of protecting itself from disaster. Hosea is the first of the prophets to denounce the calf-worship of the North; cf. 8:5. **Beth-aven**, meaning *house of evil*, is probably not a real place-name, but an ironical epithet for *Beth-el*, house of God. **That rejoiced over it**; better, correcting the text, *shall agonize for it*. **Because it is departed**; literally, *has gone into exile*.

6. On the carrying away of idols by their captors, cf. Isa. 46:1. **King Jareb** is totally unknown; no such name occurs in the known records of Assyria; cf. note on 5:13. **Shame because of his own counsel**; *i.e.* the folly of the policy of reliance upon other nations and other gods rather than upon Jehovah will be fully revealed.

7. **Foam**; better, *a chip*. The king of Israel, helpless as a

8. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed:
 the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars;
 And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us;¹
 and to the hills, Fall on us.¹

XIV. THE LONG-STANDING AND DEEP-ROOTED SIN OF ISRAEL AND ITS INEVITABLE OUTCOME, 10:9-15

9. O Israel, thou hast sinned² from³ the days of Gibeah:⁴
 there they stood;⁵ that the battle against the children of iniquity should not overtake them in Gibeah.⁶

¹ Syr. and Tg. *them*. ² Gr. and Vg. *Israel has sinned*. ³ m. *more than in*. ⁴ Gr. *the hills*. ⁵ m. *there have they continued*. ⁶ m. *shall not the battle against the children of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?*

chip floating on the surface of a mighty river and unable to determine its own course, is slain. The reference may be to some recent event, or it may be an allusion to the fate of the northern kings in general.

8. **Aven**, probably for Bethel, as in vs. 5. **The sin of Israel**; not because they were illegal altars, for the law prohibiting them had not yet been promulgated; but because they represent the whole mistaken cultus of Israel which fails to take into account the demand of Jehovah for righteousness and justice. The calf-conception of Jehovah is an insult to his majesty and his moral sublimity. Hence, the altars will be destroyed, and abandoned to **the thorn and the thistle**. In their terror before the coming judgment, the people will cry out for instant death; cf. Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16; 9:16.

9 and 10. **From the days of Gibeah**; reference being made apparently to Judg. 19, to indicate that Israel's sin is of long standing. **There they stood**; this is an obscure statement, as is also the remainder of vss. 9 and 10. The revised version of the passage is very free, being rather interpretation than translation. Perhaps the whole passage should be reconstructed as follows: *there they said, "War will not reach us in Gilead." But I came*

10. When it is my desire,¹ I will chastise them ;
and the peoples shall be gathered against them,
when they are bound² to³ their two transgressions.
11. And Ephraim is a heifer that is taught, that loveth
to tread out *the grain* ;⁴
but I have passed over upon her fair⁵ neck :
I will set a rider on Ephraim ; Judah shall plow,⁶
Jacob shall break his clods.⁷
12. Sow to yourselves in righteousness,⁸ reap according to
kindness ;⁹
break up your fallow ground :¹⁰
for it is time¹¹ to seek¹² the LORD,
till he come and rain¹³ righteousness upon you.

¹ Some codices of the Gr. omit the first phrase ; others read for it, *he came*. Syr. *in my rebuke*. ² m. yoked. Gr. *in their being trained* ; similarly Syr. ³ m. for. ⁴ Gr. *loveth strife*. ⁵ Syr. omits. ⁶ Syr. *shall tread*. Gr. *I will be silent as to Judah*. ⁷ Gr. *Jacob will strengthen him*. Syr. *Jacob will plunder him*. ⁸ Syr. *sow to yourselves righteousness*. ⁹ Gr. *reap unto fruit of life*. ¹⁰ Gr. and Syr. *kindle the light for yourselves*. ¹¹ Gr. connecting with previous phrase, *the light of knowledge*. ¹² Gr. *seek ye*. ¹³ m. *and teach you righteousness*. Gr. *till the fruits of righteousness come to us*.

against the children of iniquity and chastised them ; the tribes were gathered against them for their two sins. This experience of the past should be a lesson to the Israel of the present.

11. Ephraim has been a trained heifer that rejoiced in the task of trampling around upon the threshing-floor and eating freely of the grain (cf. Deut. 25 : 4) ; but all this must now come to an end. But I have passed over upon her fair neck ; this is a curious statement, which is probably better changed to, *but I have caused a yoke to pass over upon her fair neck*. Harsh experiences are now before Israel ; the days of ease are past. I will set a rider on Ephraim ; rather, *I will make Ephraim draw the plough*. Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods ; rather, *Judah shall harrow for him, viz. Jacob*, or Jacob may be an unnecessary explanatory note by some editor.

12. In righteousness ; better to take " righteousness " without " in " as the object of the verb, *sow righteousness*, as in the Syriac. Reap according to kindness ; better, following the Greek, *reap the fruit of piety*. Break up your fallow ground ; for it is

13. Ye have plowed ¹ wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity ;
ye have eaten the fruit of lies :² for thou didst
trust in thy way,³ in the multitude of thy mighty
men.⁴
14. Therefore shall a tumult arise among⁵ thy people,⁶
and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled,⁷
as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel⁸ in the day of
battle :
the mother was dashed in pieces with her children.
15. So shall Beth-el do unto you ⁹ because of your great
wickedness :
at daybreak¹⁰ shall the king of Israel be utterly
cut off.

¹ Gr. *why were you silent?* ² m. *faithlessness.* ³ Some codices of Gr. *in thy sins;* other codices, *in thy chariots.* ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *in the abundance of thy might.* ⁵ m. *against.* ⁶ Heb. *peoples;* but Gr., Syr. and Vg. *people.* ⁷ Gr. *and will inhabit all thy walled cities.* ⁸ Gr. *like the ruler Salaman from the house of Jeroboam.* Syr. *as Shalman from Bethel spoiled.* Vg. *as Salmana from the house of him who judged Baal.* ⁹ m. *so shall it be done unto you at Bethel, etc.;* Gr. *so will I do to you, O house of Israel.* ¹⁰ Some codices of Gr. *like dawn.*

time to seek the Lord; better, following the Greek in part, *break up for yourselves an unused field of knowledge; seek Jehovah. Till he come and rain righteousness upon you;* better, again with the Greek, *till the fruit of righteousness come unto you.*

13. Israel's whole conduct in the past has been wicked and corrupt and has already brought upon her its inevitable reward. **Thou didst trust in thy way;** better, with the Greek, *in thy chariots.* Israel has been puffed up with confidence in its military power and has forgotten its need of Jehovah.

14. **A tumult,** *i.e.* the confusion and terror of war. **Among thy people,** *i.e.* thy clans or tribes. **Thy fortresses,** in which so much trust has been misplaced, **shall be spoiled.** **As Shalman,** etc.; nothing is known either as to the identity of the king or general mentioned, nor as to the location of the place. Some frightful destruction of a town is evidently called to mind. **The mother was dashed in pieces,** etc.; cf. Gen. 32 : 11 ; 2 Kings 8 : 12 ; Ps. 137 : 8, 9.

15. **So shall Beth-el do unto you;** if text is correct, it means either that the foregoing is the natural outcome of the worship represented by the shrine at Bethel; or the god Bethel, whose

XV. THE LOVE OF JEHOVAH TOWARD ISRAEL, 11: 1-11

1. *Jehovah's Love in Days Gone by*, 11: 1-4

11. When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
and called my son¹ out of Egypt.
2. As they called² them, so they went from them:³
they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.
3. Yet I taught Ephraim to go;
I took them on my⁴ arms;
but they knew not that I healed them.

¹ Gr. *his sons*. ² Gr. *as I called*. ³ Gr. and Syr. *from my face*. ⁴ Heb. *his*.

worship is attested by papyri recently discovered at Elephantine on the Nile, will show his nothingness by his inability to save his worshippers from the aforementioned fate. But it is perhaps better to read, in part with the Greek, *so shall I do to you, O Bethel*, thus making Jehovah threaten Bethel with destruction. **At daybreak**; probably to be corrected to, *like dawn*, i.e. as suddenly as the dawn breaks out of the darkness, so unexpectedly will destruction come upon Israel's king.

1. **Called my son out of Egypt**; elsewhere Hosea represents Jehovah as Israel's husband (2: 2, 7, 16); but any writer may change his figure and the reference to Israel's childhood here puts the relationship of wife out of the question.

2. **As they called them, so they went from them**; this becomes easier from the point of view of Hebrew grammar and clearer in sense, if we read, following the Greek, *the more I called them the farther they went away from me*. The greater Jehovah's efforts through prophets to win Israel to himself, the less success had he. **The Baalim and . . . graven images**; probably a charge of two kinds of sin, viz. Baal-worship and calf-worship.

3. **Yet I**; not the Baalim — an emphatic pronoun here. **To go**; better, *to walk*. The figure is that of an infant taking its first steps. **I took them on my arms**; i.e. when tired. Jehovah exercised the endless love and patience toward Israel that characterize true parenthood. **They knew not**; i.e. failed to realize that it was I who **healed them**. Hosea either changes his figure here, or the healing must refer to the parent's ministrations when the child is bruised by falls or injured in other ways.

4. I drew them with cords of a man,
with bands of love; ¹
And I was to them as they that take off ² the yoke ³
on ⁴ their ⁵ jaws,
and I laid meat before them. ⁶

2. *Love spurned leads to Disaster, 11: 5-7*

5. He shall not return into the land of Egypt; ⁷
but the Assyrian shall be his king,
because they refused to return.
6. And the sword shall fall ⁸ upon his cities,
and shall consume his bars, ⁹ and devour *them*,
because of their own counsels.

¹ Gr. *my love*. ² Gr. *as a man striking*. ³ Gr. and Tg. omit. ⁴ Syr. *from upon*.
⁵ Gr. *his*. ⁶ Gr. *and I will look toward him; I will be able for him*. Aquila, *and I bent toward him food*. Syr. *and I inclined toward them and they ate*. ⁷ Gr. *Ephraim dwelt in Egypt*. ⁸ m. *shall rage against*. Gr. *and he was sick by the sword*; similarly Syr. Vg. *the sword began*. ⁹ Gr. *and ceased in his hands*; similarly Syr. Vg. *and consumed his chosen ones*.

4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; the figure now changes to that of oxen guided by their driver. Jehovah's guidance has been such as was suited to human beings, characterized by kindness and love. Jehovah was considerate of Israel, like the driver who removes the heavy yoke from upon the necks of his oxen, that their eating may be in comfort. **And I laid meat before them**; a difficult phrase, perhaps to be read, *I bent over him and gave him food*. This closes the description of Jehovah's tender care for his people.

5. Here begins a statement of the penalty for scorning Jehovah's claims. **He shall not return into the land of Egypt**; this is the opposite of what Hosea has said in 7: 16; 8: 13; 9: 3, 6. It is practically certain that **not** should be connected with vs. 4 and translated *to him*, which is identical in sound with *not* in its Hebrew form. This makes this vs. agree with Hosea's point of view elsewhere. **But**; better *and*; Egypt and Assyria are coupled together as instruments of punishment, as also in 9: 3. **They refused to return**; a play on words — Israel is to *return* to Egypt because they will not *return* to Jehovah.

6. **Shall fall on**; literally, *shall whirl in*, i.e. a scene of indis-

7. And my¹ people are bent² to backsliding from me:³
 though they call them to *him that is on high*,⁴
 none at all will⁵ exalt *him*.

3. *Jehovah's Inability to abandon Israel*, II:8-II

8. How shall I give thee up,⁶ Ephraim?
How shall I deliver thee,⁷ Israel?
 How shall I make thee as Admah?
How shall I set thee as Zeboim?
 Mine heart is turned within me,
 my compassions are kindled together.

¹ Heb. *his*. ² Vg. *shall hang*. ³ Gr. *from his dwelling*. Syr. *to return to me*. Vg. *to my return*. ⁴ Aquila and Theodotion, *to the yoke*. ⁵ Gr. *and God will be angry because of his honor and will not*. Syr. *and calls upon God and meditates together, but no one raises himself*. Vg. *a yoke moreover shall be imposed upon them also, which will not be carried away*. ⁶ Syr. *how shall I deliver thee*. ⁷ Gr. *protect thee*. Syr. *help thee*.

criminate slaughter is before the prophet's mind. And shall consume his bars; probably an error for *and shall consume in his cities*, which may be an explanatory note on the previous *shall whirl*. And devour them, because of their own counsels, *i.e.* their counsels of wickedness. But it is better to make a slight change and read, *and devour in their fortresses*.

7. My people are bent to backsliding from me; the Hebrew here is very obscure and of irregular grammatical construction. It is best corrected so as to yield, *my people have wearied me with their rebellions*. Jehovah's patience is exhausted; Israel must now suffer. Though they call them to **him that is on high**; this text is in even worse condition than the foregoing, being really untranslatable. The proper way to correct it awaits discovery. One recent reconstruction is, "unto the yoke Jehovah will appoint them, since he has ceased to love them." Another rewrites the whole verse thus, "my people hang back day after day upon its cords; 'up, up,' does one call; but not once does it arouse itself." The verse remains a riddle.

8. **How shall, or how can, I give thee up**; the love of Jehovah for Israel is so deep that he cannot lightly contemplate the prospect of severing relationship with the nation and giving it over to destruction. Admah and Zeboim were cities of the plain which

9. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,
 I will not return ¹ to destroy Ephraim:
 For I am God, and not man;
 the Holy One in the midst of thee:
 and I will not enter into the city.²
10. They shall walk ³ after the LORD, who shall roar
 like a lion:
 for he shall roar, and the children shall come trem-
 bling from the west.⁴

¹ Gr. *I will not abandon.* ² m. *will not come in wrath.* ³ Gr. *I will walk.* ⁴ Gr. *and children of waters will be amazed.* Syr. *and children from the people shall tremble.*

were destroyed in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; cf. Gen. 14: 8; 19: 28 f. **Mine heart is turned within me**, etc.; the feelings of Jehovah completely overcome him.

9. **I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger**; this and the following statements, through vs. 10 and 11, are quite the opposite of what Hosea has said thus far regarding Jehovah's purpose; cf. vs. 6; 10: 14; 9: 15 ff.; 8: 13 f.; 4: 3. It is better to regard this whole section, vs. 9-11, as having originated with some later editor, whose convictions regarding Jehovah's mercy led him to supplement Hosea's words in this way. **I will not return to destroy**, *i.e.* I will not again punish Ephraim; written probably after the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. **I am God, and not man**; not subject therefore to feelings of passionate revenge, such as actuate human beings. Hence he will not allow himself to be carried away by unreasoning wrath to such an extent as to destroy Israel completely. **The Holy One in the midst of thee**; cf. Isa. 6: 3-7. The thought of holiness in early Israel laid emphasis upon the idea of separation from everything that was not holy. **And I will not enter into the city**; the meaning of this statement in this context is so ambiguous that many recent scholars insist that the text must be in error here. No agreement prevails among those accepting this translation as to its bearing upon the discourse. The simplest emendation offered so far yields, *and I come not to consume*.

10. **They shall walk after the Lord, who shall roar like a lion**; this is a description of the return from exile. Jehovah's call, like a lion's roar, will be heard far and wide, bringing joy to his people and terror to their enemies. **Children shall come trembling from the west**; this again is a hopelessly obscure line. The

11. They shall come trembling¹ as a bird out of Egypt,
and as a dove out of the land of Assyria:
And I will make them to dwell² in their houses,
saith the LORD.

XVI. THE UNPARDONABLE DECEIT OF ISRAEL, II:12-
12:14

12. Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood,
and the house of Israel with deceit:
But Judah yet ruleth with God,³ and is faithful with
the Holy One.⁴

¹ Vg. *They shall fly away.* ² Gr. *I will restore them.* Syr. *I will return them.* ³ Gr. *now God knows them,* connecting *Judah* with the previous phrase. Vg. *Judah, moreover, descends as a witness with God.* Syr. *until the people of God descend,* treating *Judah* as in Gr. ⁴ m. *and Judah is yet unsteadfast with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful.* Gr. *and will be named a holy people of God.* Syr. *a holy people and faithful.*

Hebrew says literally, *and shall tremble sons from sea.* But the exiles have been represented as living in Assyria on the east or in Egypt on the south. Hence there is no meaning in "from sea" or "from west" in speaking of their return.

11. **As a bird and as a dove;** probably intended to represent the swiftness of the return. **Egypt and Assyria;** Hosea himself seems to have been uncertain where the Hebrew exiles would be taken, whether to Assyria or Egypt. As a matter of fact, the later Jewish exiles scattered themselves over the whole known world. **And I will make them to dwell;** we should probably read with the Greek, *I will cause them to return to their houses.*

12. **Compasseth me about with falsehood;** the whole religious atmosphere is surcharged with faithlessness to Jehovah; cf. 4:2; 6:7; 7:1, 3, 13; 10:4, 13. **Judah yet ruleth with God;** a very uncertain phrase; the word "ruleth" elsewhere means "roam around," which is wholly unsuitable here. The exact meaning is beyond recovery, but if the following phrase is correctly preserved, it seems necessary to suppose that this is a word of praise for Judah. In that case, this and the following phrase must be regarded as a later addition, for Hosea elsewhere does not discriminate in favor of Judah; cf. 5:5, 10, 12 ff.; 6:4; 10:11; 12:2. But, in view of 12:2, it seems probable that the text here is corrupt, and that originally this was a word of denunciation, rather than praise. **And is faithful with the Holy One,**

12. Ephraim feedeth on wind ¹ and followeth after the east wind:
 he ² continually multiplieth lies and desolation; ³
 And they make a covenant with Assyria,
 and oil is carried ⁴ into Egypt.
2. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah,
 and will punish ⁵ Jacob according to his ways;
 according to his doings will he recompense him.
3. In the womb he took his brother by the heel;
 and in his manhood ⁶ he had power ⁷ with God:

¹ Gr. *Ephraim is a bad wind.* ² Syr. *they.* ³ Gr. *falsehood.* ⁴ Syr. *they carry.*
 Gr. *he imported.* Vg. *he bore.* ⁵ Heb. *visit upon.* ⁶ m. *strength.* Gr. *troubles.*
⁷ m. *he strove.* Vg. *he was straight.*

i.e. with God, in contrast to Israel that has been disloyal to Jehovah. The same doubt exists here as in the foregoing clause. If this be the true meaning, this clause too is of late origin. The only change thus far offered which yields the kind of sense called for is, *and with sodomites is joined.*

1. **Feedeth on**, or *shepherds*, the wind; *i.e.* the outcome of Ephraim's endeavor will be nothingness, or worse, for the east wind is the sultry, killing wind from the dry and parched desert. **Desolation**; better, with a slight change of text, *falsehood*; cf. 11:12. **They make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt**; this is an evidence of Israel's deceit and faithlessness. They turn to foreign nations and their gods for aid, notwithstanding the fact that their sole allegiance and confidence are pledged to Jehovah. Furthermore, it may have been that they were dealing with both nations at the same time, planning to cast in their lot with the stronger when it should appear which way fortune was going.

2. **A controversy with Judah**; a sharp contrast to 11:12. **Jacob** represents northern Israel. The **doings** of Israel are responsible for the coming downfall; cf. 4:9; 5:4.

3. The reference to Jacob in vs. 2 led some editor to inscribe upon the margin of a manuscript one of the traditions regarding Jacob which seemed to him characteristic and of interest in connection with Hosea's charges against Jacob. This editorial addition, with some editorial comment, is contained in vss. 3-6 and 12, 13. The genuine Hosea material in this chapter is thus limited to vss. 1, 2, 7-11, 14.

4. Yea, he had power¹ over the angel, and prevailed:
 he wept, and made supplication unto him:²
 He found him³ at Beth-el,⁴
 and there he spake with us;⁵
5. Even the LORD, the God of hosts;⁶
 the LORD is his memorial.
6. Therefore turn thou to thy God:
 keep mercy and judgement,
 and wait on thy God continually.
7. *He is* a trafficker,⁷ the balances of deceit are in his
 hand:
 he loveth to oppress.⁸

¹ Vg. *he was strong*. Syr. omits. ² Gr. *they wept and they besought me*. Syr. omits *he wept*. ³ Gr. *me*. ⁴ Gr. *in the house of On*. ⁵ Gr. *to them*. Syr. *him*. ⁶ m. *for the Lord is the God of hosts*. ⁷ m. *as for Canaan, the etc. or he is a Canaanite*. Heb. *Canaan*. ⁸ m. *defraud*. Vg. *calumny*.

In the womb, etc.; cf. Gen. 25:26. He had power with God; better, *he strove with God*; cf. Gen. 32:24-29. So also *he strove with the angel*; *angel* here is equivalent to God; cf. Gen. 16:10; 17:18-20; Judg. 6:11-24.

4. He found him at Beth-el and there he spake with us; better, *with him*, as in Syriac. This is a reference to Jacob's dream; cf. Gen. 28:10-22.

5. Even the Lord, the God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial; better, *Jehovah, the God of hosts, Jehovah is his name*; a specification of the person referred to in the foregoing *spake with him*. For memorial in sense of *name* or *title*, cf. Exod. 3:15.

6. Therefore turn thou to thy God; perhaps, *by the help of thy God*. The words are addressed to Israel in exhortation by the writer of this note. Keep mercy and judgement, etc.; this is the kind of admonition common in later times and probably belongs to the Deuteronomic age.

7. He is a trafficker; the balances of deceit are in his hand; better, *A Canaan! balances, etc., i.e. Jacob, or Israel, is characterized as a Canaanite, a designation almost equivalent to "a tricky merchant,"* for trade and commerce had been learned from the Canaanites by Israel; cf. Prov. 31:24; Job 41:6; Zeph. 1:11. Deceitful balances are denounced also in Am. 8:5. To oppress; *i.e. by reducing people to poverty through cheating them out of their hard-earned gains.*

8. And Ephraim said, Surely I am become rich,
 I have found me wealth: ¹
 In all my ² labours they shall find ³ in me ⁴
 none iniquity that were sin. ⁵
9. But I am the LORD thy God ⁶
 from the land of Egypt;
 I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents,
 as in the days of the solemn feast.
10. I have also spoken unto the prophets,
 and I have multiplied visions;
 and by the ministry ⁷ of the prophets have I used
 similitudes.

¹ Gr. relief. Vg. an idol. Syr. pain. ² Gr. his. ³ Gr. shall be found. Syr. none of my labors suffices. ⁴ Gr. for him. ⁵ Syr. for the sin which he has sinned. Gr. on account of the sins which he sinned. ⁶ Gr. inserts who brought thee up. Syr. and Tg. insert who caused thee to go forth. ⁷ Heb. hand.

8. **And Ephraim said**; better, *but Ephraim says, i.e.* Ephraim retorts to the charges of crookedness that she has acquired wealth thereby. Prosperity was for the early Hebrew a proof of the divine favor. Hence the patent facts show that the prophet's charges cannot be true; prosperity presupposes piety. **In all my labours they shall find in me none iniquity that were sin**; the meaning of this is that Israel repudiates the charge of cheating, and declares that all her wealth has been honestly obtained. It is better translated, however, with some change of text, *none of his gains shall suffice to him for the guilt wherein he has sinned*. The wealth Israel has secured will not serve to justify the treachery and deceit which have contributed to the gaining of it.

9. **But**; better, *for*. **I am the Lord thy God**, etc., better, *I, Jehovah, thy God from the land of Egypt, will again make*, etc. The punishment awaiting Israel for her sin will be in kind a repetition of exile from home land, like the Egyptian bondage. **As in the days of the solemn feast**, *i.e.* the feast of booths, when all the people took to tent life; cf. Lev. 23:39-43.

10. **I have also spoken unto the prophets**, etc., *i.e.* Jehovah has done everything in his power to turn Israel into the right paths, but she has persisted in going astray. She will not learn to do right. **Have I used similitudes**; it must be rendered by a verb in the future, *will I*; but this meaning yields little sense here. Perhaps, we should associate the verb with another root

11. Is Gilead iniquity? ¹ they are altogether vanity;
 in Gilgal they sacrifice bullocks: ²
 Yea, their altars are ³ as heaps ⁴
 in the furrows of the field.
12. And Jacob fled into the field of Aram,
 and Israel served for a wife,
 and for a wife he kept *sheep*.
13. And by a prophet ⁵ the LORD brought Israel up out
 of Egypt,
 and by a prophet was he preserved. ⁶
14. Ephraim hath provoked to anger most bitterly: ⁷

¹ Gr. *unless Gilead is, then they, etc.* Syr. *in Gilead is pain.* ² Gr. *surely false ones were in Gilead, rulers sacrificing.* Syr. *to vanity ye sacrifice oxen in Gilgal.* ³ m. *shall be.* ⁴ Gr. *tortoises.* ⁵ Syr. *prophets.* ⁶ m. *kept.* ⁷ Gr. *Ephraim was angry and provoked to anger; similarly Syr.*

and render, *through the prophets will I destroy.* They have refused to take the prophets as guides to safety; now they shall be led by them to ruin; cf. 4: 5; 6: 5; Mic. 3: 5 ff.

11. **Is Gilead iniquity?** Doubtless to be corrected, with the Syriac, to *in Gilead is iniquity*; cf. 6: 8. **In Gilgal**; cf. 4: 15; 9: 15. **They sacrifice bullocks**; there was nothing reprehensible, so far as we know, in the sacrifice of oxen in Gilgal. Sacrifice in the days of Hosea was legitimate at any shrine dedicated to Jehovah. The probability is that we should read *they sacrifice to demons*, a charge of idolatrous worship of alien gods. If this reading be correct, the preceding phrase, **they are altogether vanity**, is a marginal note characterizing the "demons," which has crept into the text. **Yea, their altars are**, etc.; a comparison of the numerous idolatrous altars to the piles of stone dotting the fields after the stones lying on the surface have been gathered together. The downfall of Gilead came through Tiglath-pileser of Assyria; cf. 2 Kings 15: 29. His own record of the event, in a badly preserved text, runs thus: "the town Gilead . . . Abel . . . which is a part of the land of the house of Omri . . . the broad, throughout its extent I added to the territory of Assyria; and established my officer as governor over them."

12. This and vs. 13 belong to the editorial addition. The story referred to occurs in Gen. 27: 41-30: 43.

13. **A prophet**; evidently Moses is meant; for a similar estimate of his function, cf. Deut. 18: 15, 18.

therefore shall his blood be left ¹ upon him,
and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

XVII. HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN! 13:1-16

1. *Baal Worship spells Ruin, 13:1-8*

13. When Ephraim spake, there was trembling;²

he exalted himself in Israel:³

but when he offended in Baal, he died.⁴

2. And now ⁵ they sin more and more,

and have made them molten images of their silver,

Even idols according to their own understanding,⁶

all of them the work of the craftsmen:

¹ Gr. and Syr. *be poured out*. Vg. *shall come*. ² m. *when Ephraim spake with trembling*. Gr. *according to the word Ephraim ordinances*. Syr. *when he spake Ephraim was trembling*. ³ Gr. *(ordinances) he himself took in Israel*. Syr. *and he was prince in Israel*; similarly Tg. ⁴ m. *when he became guilty, etc.* Gr. *and he set them for the Baal and died*. ⁵ Gr. *omits now*. ⁶ Gr. *according to the image of idols*. Vg. *idols as if a likeness*. Syr. *according to their likeness*.

14. This is the return which Israel has made to Jehovah's efforts in her behalf; cf. vs. 10. **Blood be left upon him**, *i.e.* the crimes he has committed shall not be forgiven, but shall remain upon him as a burden of guilt to be avenged. **His reproach**; either the reproach brought upon Jehovah by the sins of his people, or the reproach resting upon Israel on account of its many sins. **Return unto him**, *i.e.* repay to him in fitting penalty.

1. The influence of Ephraim in days gone by was very great; his words carried weight. **He exalted himself in Israel**; better, *he was a prince in Israel*. Ephraim is thought of here not as a name for the whole Northern Kingdom, but as representing simply the main tribe in Israel, from which leadership had come in the past. But all this power passed away as a result of the adoption of Baal worship, which sounded the death-knell of the nation.

2. There is no improvement at the present day; rather, Israel goes from bad to worse. **Molten images**, *i.e.* the calves of Bethel, Dan, and other shrines; cf. 8:5, 6. **According to their own understanding**; better, with the versions, *according to their pattern*. **The work of the craftsmen**; nothing godlike about

- They say of them,
 Let the men that sacrifice¹ kiss the calves.
3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud,
 and as the dew that passeth early away,
 As the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out
 of the threshing-floor,
 and as the smoke out of the chimney.
4. Yet I am the LORD thy God² from the land of Egypt;
 and thou shalt know³ no god but me,
 and beside me there is no saviour.
5. I did know thee⁴ in the wilderness,
 in the land of great drought.⁵
6. According to their pasture, so were they filled;
 they were filled,⁶ and their heart was exalted:
 therefore have they forgotten me.

¹ m. the sacrificers of men. Gr. sacrifice ye men; the calves have indeed forsaken.
² Gr. adds here, the one establishing the heavens and creating the earth, whose hands created all the host of the heavens, and I did not show them to thee in order that thou mightest follow after them; and I led thee. Syr. inserts, who led thee. ³ m. thou knowest.
⁴ Gr. and Syr. I shepherded thee. ⁵ Gr. in an uninhabited land. Vg. in a land of solitude. Syr. in a land of drought, which was not inhabited. ⁶ Gr. according to their pastures; and they were filled unto fulness. Syr. and thou didst shepherd them; and their bellies were filled.

them; the product of human hands. **They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves;** this is very difficult, both from the point of view of Hebrew grammar and from that of meaning. It is, perhaps, better to read, *to such those sacrificing say, O God. Men kissing calves!* Kissing was an act of worship; cf. 1 Kings 19: 18. This last phrase is the prophet's exclamation of disgust.

3. The prophet heaps up descriptions of the speedy downfall of the Northern Kingdom.

4. **From the land of Egypt, i.e. from the time of the Exodus;** perhaps we should insert before this, with the Greek and Syriac, *who led thee.* Thou shalt know; better, with the margin, *thou knowest.* All Israel's good has come from Jehovah.

5. **I did know thee in the wilderness;** better, with Gr. and Syr., *I shepherded thee,* etc.; cf. Ps. 23: 1.

6. **According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled;** better, with some change of text, *when they pastured,*

7. Therefore am I¹ unto them as a lion:
as a leopard will I watch by the way:²
8. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her
whelps,
and will rend the caul of their heart:
And there will I³ devour them like a lion;
the wild beast shall tear them.
2. *Israel's Princes are Powerless before Jehovah, 13:9-11*
9. It is thy destruction,⁴ O Israel,
that *thou art* against me, against thy help.⁵
10. Where now is thy king,
that he may save thee in⁶ all thy cities?
And thy judges⁷ of whom thou saidst,⁸
Give me a king and princes?⁹

¹ Gr. *I will be.* ² Gr. *as a leopard according to the way of the Assyrians.* ³ Gr. *they.* Syr. *a lion (devour them).* ⁴ m. *thou art destroyed, O Israel, for thou, etc.* ⁵ m. *for in me, in thy help—, or, but in me is thy help.* Gr. *who will help in thy destruction, O Israel?* Syr. *I have destroyed thee, O Israel; who will help thee?* ⁶ Syr. *and.* ⁷ Gr. *let him judge thee.* ⁸ Syr. *whom thou didst ask from me and say.* ⁹ Gr., Syr. and Tg. *a prince.*

they completely sated themselves. Yet, notwithstanding such bounteous favor, **their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.** Their sense of self-sufficiency shut out the thought of Jehovah. Man's needs keep him in mind of God.

7. **Am I;** better, with Greek, *I will be.* The punishment of their sin is now described. **Will I watch by the way,** ready to jump upon the passing prey. Another possible reading is suggested by the Greek, viz. *I will be to them like a lion, like a leopard, on the way to Assyria; i.e.* as they go to Assyria to seek aid, Jehovah will fall upon them with destruction.

8. **The caul of their heart;** literally, *the enclosure of their heart, i.e.* their breast. **And there,** viz. by the roadside, or on the way to Assyria,

9. **It is thy destruction;** better, with a very easy correction, *I will destroy thee.* **That thou art against me, against thy help;** a most unlikely meaning for the Hebrew. The second of the marginal renderings is much more probable. But the Greek and

11. I have given ¹ thee a king in mine anger,
and have taken him away in my wrath.

3. *Irrevocable Doom*, 13: 12-16

12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up;
his sin is laid up in store.
13. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon
him:
he is an unwise son;
For it is time ² he should not tarry
in ³ the place of the breaking forth of children.
14. I will ransom them from the power ⁴ of the grave; ⁵
I will redeem them from death:

¹ Gr. and Syr. *and I gave*. ² Gr. omits *it is time*. Syr., Vg. and Tg. *for now he, etc.*
³ m. *when it is time, he standeth not in*. ⁴ Heb. *hand*. ⁵ Heb. *Sheol*.

Syriac suggest a better reading, viz., *Yea, who will be thy help?*
No one can protect Israel against Jehovah's wrathful power.

10. An ironical question intended to emphasize the helplessness of the regularly constituted authorities. **Of whom thou saidst**; either at the time of the founding of the monarchy, or at the disruption, or in connection with the various changes of dynasty in the North.

11. **I have given . . . and have taken**; rather, *I give . . . and take*. The various changes and upheavals in the dynasties of the North can but mean that Jehovah has used the kingship as an instrument with which to punish Israel. The beginning and the end of the monarchy are alike proofs of Jehovah's anger.

12. **Bound up**, like money tied up in a bag, stored away for future reference. Jehovah will not forget Ephraim's sins, but will repay them in due time.

13. **Sorrows**; better, *pains* or *pangs*; agonizing and inescapable pain. **An unwise son**, or *child*; one who fails to coöperate in the labor of birth. Israel is now not the mother, but the child on the point of being born. **For it is time**; better, *for now*. **He should not tarry**; literally *stand*; by his delay he forfeits his life. Some weakness and indecision in the national character is apparently in the mind of the prophet.

14. **I will ransom them . . . I will redeem them**; better

- O death, where ¹ are thy plagues? ²
 O grave, ³ where ¹ is thy destruction? ⁴
 Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
15. Though he be fruitful ⁵ among his brethren,
 an east wind shall come, the breath ⁶ of the LORD
 coming up ⁷ from the wilderness,
 And his spring shall become dry, ⁸
 and his fountain shall be dried up: ⁹
 He ¹⁰ shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.
16. Samaria shall bear her guilt; ¹¹
 for she hath rebelled against her God:

¹ m. *I will be*; so Vg. ² Gr. *thy right*. Vg. *thy death*. Syr. *thy victory*. ³ Heb. *Sheol*. ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *thy sting*. Vg. *thy bite*. ⁵ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *separate*. ⁶ m. *wind*. ⁷ Gr. *the Lord will bring a burning wind upon him*; similarly Vg. and Tg. ⁸ Gr. *and will dry up his veins*; similarly Vg. and Syr. ⁹ Gr. *and will dry up his fountains*; similarly Vg. ¹⁰ m. *it*. ¹¹ m. *become desolate*; so Gr.

taken as a question, *shall I (or can I) ransom them . . . shall I redeem them?* A promise of redemption is wholly out of place here; the last clause of the verse renders it impossible. Moreover it is in conflict with Hosea's attitude elsewhere throughout the book; cf. vs. 16; 10:14, 15; 12:14. **O death, where are thy plagues?** etc.; not a cry of victory over death, but a summons to death to send its destroying agencies against Israel. The interpretation of this verse embodied in 1 Cor. 15:55 was based upon the Greek translation found in the Septuagint, which was the Bible of the early church, and does not represent the thought of Hosea. **Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes**; Jehovah's purpose to punish is fixed and immutable.

15. **Though he be fruitful**; a pun on *Ephraim*, the sound of which in Hebrew suggests the word for fruitful. **Among his brethren**; it is difficult to see who Ephraim's brethren can be; for Hosea here designates the whole nation as Ephraim. Possibly the neighboring peoples of Moab, Ammon, Edom, etc. are meant. An attractive emendation yields, *as the reed among the waters*. **An east wind**; the most destructive to vegetation, bringing with it parching heat from the desert, which dries up all the water-sources. **He shall spoil the treasure**; now the figure is dropped and the bald reality is substituted; the eastern conqueror will carry away all treasures as spoil.

16. **Bear her guilt**; cf. 10:2; 13:1. A slight change gives

They shall fall by the sword;¹
 their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
 and their women with child shall be ripped up.

XVIII. A CALL TO REPENTANCE, 14: 1-3

14. O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God;
 for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
2. Take with you words,
 and return unto the LORD:¹
 Say unto him, Take away all iniquity,²
 and accept that which is good:³
 so will we render *as bullocks the offering of our lips*.⁴

¹Gr. and Syr. add *your God*. ²Gr. *in order that you may not receive iniquity*. Syr. *that he may leave for you iniquity*. ³m. *receive us graciously*. ⁴Gr. and Syr. *we will render the fruit of our (Syr. your) lips*.

will be laid waste. The punishment for her sin will be devastating and terrible. For similar practices in war, cf. 10: 14; Am. 1: 13; 2 Kings 8: 12; 15: 16; Ps. 137: 9; Judg. 1: 6 f.; Josh. 10: 24.

There is no good reason for denying 14: 1-3 to Hosea. The aim of Hosea's ministry certainly was to call Israel to repentance, that thereby she might escape the impending disaster. The content of this call is in no way inconsistent with the message of Hosea as found elsewhere.

1. For a similar strain, cf. 2: 2; 10: 12. **Thou hast fallen**; disaster has already set in; cf. 5: 11-13; 7: 9. **By thine iniquity**; cf. 4: 2; 5: 5.

2. **Take with you words**; not sacrificial gifts, but words expressive of a change of heart. **Take away all iniquity** is equivalent to "forgive us our sins," being an acknowledgement of guilt and a plea for pardon. **And accept that which is good**; if this text be correct the meaning must be "accept what is good, viz. that we pay, etc." But it is not improbable that a slight error has crept in and that the original reading was *that we may receive good*. So will we render *as bullocks the offering of our lips*, this is rather an interpretation than a translation. The Hebrew is literally *and we will render bullocks our lips*, which is probably an error for *and we will render the fruit of our lips*, which is found in the Greek and Syriac.

3. ¹ Asshur shall not save us;
 we will not ride upon horses:
 Neither will we say any more to the work of our
 hands, *Ye are* our gods:
 for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.²

XIX. PARDON AND PROMISE, 14:4-8

4. I will heal their backsliding,³ I will love them freely:⁴
 for mine anger is turned away from him.

¹ Syr. begins with *and they will say*. ² Gr. *the one in thee pities the fatherless*.
 Syr. *because thou pitiest the fatherless*; similarly Vg. ³ Gr. *their dwellings*. Syr., Vg.
 and Tg. *their penitence*. ⁴ Syr. *their vows*.

3. Asshur, *i.e.* Assyria, shall not save us, *i.e.* dependence for help will no longer be made upon Assyria; cf. 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 12:1. Jehovah alone will be relied upon. **We will not ride upon horses**; no trust will be placed in cavalry; cf. 10:14. Egypt seems to have been looked upon as the chief source of the horse supply; cf. Isa. 30:16; 31:1; Ezek. 17:15; 1 Kings 10:28. **The work of our hands**; a relinquishment of idolatry; cf. 13:2; 5:12; 8:5,6; 10:5,6. **For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy**; in contrast with the powerless and unfeeling idols and the futile aid of foreign powers, friendless Israel now realizes that Jehovah, the mighty God, will exercise forbearance and love toward his people.

This section (vss. 4-8) is, on the whole, best regarded as the expression of later thought. It is an assurance of pardon and prosperity to Israel such as it is difficult to ascribe to Hosea. There is no foundation for it in the prophecy thus far. Israel has only been urged to repent; she has not recorded her intention to accept the invitation. There is not in this section itself any statement that Israel has changed her character or her course. Hosea could not well have made such glowing statements as these without emphasizing the fact of the moral and spiritual regeneration of Israel. These verses, like those at the close of Amos, have been placed here by a later editor in order that the close of Hosea's book might sound the note of hope and positive restoration of the divine favor.

4. This verse is in direct contradiction to 13:14-16 and the burden of Hosea's preaching. Such a change in Jehovah's attitude requires a preceding and corresponding change in the heart

5. I will be as the dew unto Israel :
he shall blossom as the lily,
and cast forth his roots¹ as Lebanon.
6. His branches shall spread,²
and his beauty shall be as the olive tree,
and his smell as Lebanon.
7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return ;³
they shall revive⁴ as the corn, and blossom as
the vine :
the scent thereof⁵ shall be as the wine of Lebanon.
8. Ephraim *shall say*, What⁶ have I⁷ to do any more
with idols ?

¹ Vg. *his root will burst forth.* ² Syr. *sprout.* ³ Syr. *shall be built.* Gr. *they shall turn and shall dwell under his shadow.* ⁴ Gr., Syr. and Tg. *shall live.* Gr. adds *and shall be drunk.* ⁵ m. *his memorial.* ⁶ m. *O Ephraim, what.* ⁷ Gr. *has he.*

of Israel. **Love them freely**; not because of any reward from them, but of my own free initiative. **Mine anger is turned away from them**; cf. 11:9; Isa. 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4; 5:25.

5. **As the dew**; refreshing and invigorating; cf. 6:4. **The lily**; the precise species of lily is not known. There are in Palestine as elsewhere several varieties. **Cast forth his roots like Lebanon**; referring either to the roots of the mountains or to the roots of the cedars that cover them.

6. **Branches**; better, *shoots*, the young growth springing up around the roots of a tree; literally his *suckers*. **The beauty of the olive tree** is associated with its usefulness and value. **Smell as Lebanon**, *i.e.* the odor of the cedars; cf. Song of Songs 4:11.

7. **They that dwell under his shadow shall return**; the figure of the nation as a flourishing tree continues. Those that **dwell under his shadow** must be the individual members of the nation, to whom return from exile is here promised. But it is better to correct the text slightly and read, *they shall again dwell under his shadow*; *viz.* the exiles shall be restored to their homes and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." **They shall revive as the corn**; a comparison with the rapid and luxurious growth of grain. But a slightly different text yields the better meaning, *they shall live well-watered like a garden.* **The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon**; *i.e.* the odor of the garden by which the renown of Israel is represented, shall be as famous and widespread as that of the wine of Lebanon; cf. vs. 6.

I have answered,¹ and will regard² him :
 I am like a green fir tree ;
 from me is thy fruit found.

XX. A WORD TO THE WISE, 14 : 9

9. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?
 prudent, and he shall know them ?
 For the ways of the LORD are right,
 and the just shall walk in them ;
 but transgressors shall fall therein.

¹ Gr. and Syr. *I have humbled him.* ² Gr. *overpower.* Syr. *glorify.* Vg. *guide.*

8. **Ephraim** shall say, **What have I to do**, etc.? The words "shall say" are not in the Hebrew; hence it is easier to follow the Greek and render, *What has Ephraim to do*, etc.? Jehovah asks this question; it presupposes the answer "nothing." **I have answered and will regard him**; better, *I will answer and will care for him*. Jehovah assures Israel of far better provision and protection than idols could ever furnish. **I am like a green fir tree**; Jehovah evidently is still the speaker. The refreshing shade of the *cypress*, not *fir tree*, is the point of the comparison. **From me is thy fruit found**; neither fir nor cypress produces fruit; evidently the prophet's thought has leaped from the evergreen to the fruit tree. All the blessings of Israel come from Jehovah.

9. This is a closing word added by an editor who would commend the study of the Book of Hosea to seekers after wisdom. **Who is wise**, etc.? Rather, *Who is wise? Let him understand these things*, etc., *i.e.* such things as these constitute the fit study of the man who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah. **Prudent**, *i.e.* discerning, intelligent. **Right**, or *straight*. The same *ways* prove easy for some and hard for others; the **just** find joy in the doing of God's will, but **transgressors** stumble over it. They have no heart for it.

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF
MICAH

INTRODUCTION

I. THE BOOK OF MICAH

I. THE TEXT

THE text of Micah has come down in a very poor state of preservation. Hosea alone among the Minor Prophets is in worse condition and there is little in the Old Testament as a whole that is more corrupt. This fact, of course, makes any translation conjectural to a large extent and leaves the meaning of the prophet open to question at many points. The most uncertain portion of the text is contained in chaps. 1 and 2. This is due to three causes, viz. (1) the presence of many proper names, which are always easily corrupted in transmission; (2) the denunciatory character of the material in these chapters, which would provoke the ameliorating activity of later editors; and (3) the fact that these chapters fall within the oldest section of the book.

2. STYLE

Micah combines the clarity of Amos with the passion of Hosea. That a prophet with intense feeling should indulge in a series of puns as in 1 : 10 ff. may seem strange; but it must be borne in mind that the pun was employed, not from the point of view of its humor, but for the purpose of making a deep impression through a striking phrase. Most terrible denunciations were often stated in such forms; cf. Isa. 3 : 16 ff. The style of chaps. 1-3

is straightforward and vigorous. The language is pictorial throughout this section. The speech of Micah abounds in metaphors, from one to another of which he leaps in rapid succession. He is a poet of high rank, using not merely poetic material in the expression of his thought, but giving to it also a carefully wrought out poetic form. The regularity of this poetic form is less marked than in the case of Amos, but on the other hand is more pronounced than in Hosea. The total effect is that of discourse in the highest degree vivid, strong, and logically effective.

In the latter portion of the book, chaps. 4-7, there is a marked change. On the whole, these chapters seem to proceed from a less vigorous mind. For the most part, the movement of thought is much more calm and reflective. The sharp denunciation of chaps. 1-3 is much less in evidence. The vividness and passion of those chapters is likewise missing. The contrast between 1-3 and 4-7 is that between a tumbling mountain torrent and a placid lake. But there is not the same unity of style throughout 4-7 as is found throughout 1-3.

3. UNITY

This leads us to the question of the unity of the book of Micah. The book resolves itself naturally into three divisions, viz. chaps. 1-3, chaps. 4-5, and chaps. 6-7. Chaps. 1-3 contain almost exclusively denunciations of sin and threats of punishment; chaps. 4-5 are made up prevaingly of words of hope and encouragement; while chaps. 6-7 mingle threat and promise. But the point of view and the background change so often within these divisions that, from the time of Ewald on (1867 A.D.),

many scholars have maintained that the book was not all written by Micah himself.

Chaps. 1-3, with the exception of 1:7 and 2:12, 13, are generally accepted as representing the thought and style of Micah. But with reference to chaps. 4-5 and 6-7 the judgment of scholars is far otherwise. Chaps. 4 and 5 are composed of a collection of materials from various sources, their only bond of connection one with another being an attitude of hope and expectation toward the future of Israel. The only portions in them which might possibly have originated with Micah are 4:14 and 5:8-12. The passages 4:11-13 and 5:6-8 reflect the same background and breathe the same spirit; the remaining materials have no close relationship with them or with one another. For example, the attitude toward the pagan world in 4:12-13 is quite different from that in 4:1-4, and the conception of the Messiah in 5:1-3 is not in keeping with that in 5:4-5.

In chaps. 6-7, the only possible descendants from Micah himself are 6:9-16 and 7:1-6, and this is only a possibility. Micah's authorship of the rest is excluded. The same lack of inner coherence characterizes these chapters as chaps. 4-5. Two passages, viz. 7:7-10 and 7:14-20, may have some mutual relationships; but even they are separated each from the other by 7:11-13, a wholly foreign element in this context. The two chapters as a whole seem to evince a variety of historical backgrounds and a multiple authorship.

II. THE PROPHET MICAH

All we know regarding Micah is contained in Micah, chaps. 1-3 and Jer. 26:18. His name means "Who is

like Jehovah?" But this is no evidence of unusual piety on his part or that of his parents, since Hebrew children were commonly named after Jehovah, even when the parents were not especially noted for zeal in his service; Ahab and Ahaz, for example, named their children in honor of Jehovah.

The description of him as "the Morashtite" (1:1; Jer. 26:18) distinguishes him from the many other bearers of his name, seven of whom appear in the Old Testament. The most distinguished of these, next to our prophet, was Micaiah ben Imlah, who is confused with our prophet in 1 Kings 22:28, where a sentence from the book of Micah is ascribed to Micaiah ben Imlah. This term "Morashtite" is the only guide we have to the home of Micah. It most naturally points to Moresheth-Gath (1:14), a small town lying in the low hills of the Shephelah, bordering upon the territory of Philistia and in close proximity to Gath itself. The list of towns in 1:10 ff., the destruction of which calls forth the poignant grief of Micah, seems to point to that same region and so to strengthen our belief that the home of the prophet was on the western slope of the hills of Judah. Amos had lived less than twenty miles away, on the other side of the range of hills. But whereas Amos had been surrounded by rocky and barren wastes, Micah lived in the midst of most fertile fields. It is as the tiller of these fields and as one thoroughly acquainted with all the beauties of the country landscape and the simple joys of rustic life, that Micah comes before us. He speaks as a peasant pleading the cause of fellow-peasants against the rich oppressor. He measures the urban culture by the uncompromising standards of the country-side and pronounces it wanting.

Micah was fearless and outspoken in his criticism of the rulers and the rich. This boldness of utterance seems to have made a deep impression, for his example was cited in defence of Jeremiah's prophetic freedom a century later; Jer. 26:18. He was bound by few traditions and no conventions. He saw beneath the glitter and polish of the city and discerned the underlying injustice and vice. He unflinchingly exposed corruption and dared to threaten the capital city itself with destruction on account of its sins. His was a task from which any man might well shrink. But for Micah the voice of duty was the voice of God. We have no record of any vision or trance in his experience. The prophetic fire was kindled in him by the contemplation of his country's ills.

III. THE TIMES OF MICAH

I. THE DATE

The superscription (1:1) places Micah "in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah." This statement, like those in Hos. 1:1 and Isa. 1:1, is probably of late origin. But from Jer. 26:18 we learn that "Micah the Morashtite was prophesying in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah." It is hardly likely that Micah prophesied in the reign of Jotham or in the early part of the reign of Ahaz, for he is wholly silent regarding the great catastrophe of 735 to 734, involving the invasion of the North by Tiglath-pileser and the depopulating of the regions beyond Jordan (2 Kings 15:29). This silence would be inexplicable if Micah had prophesied as a contemporary of those events.

For more definite information concerning the time of Micah's work, we turn to chaps. 1-3. The very first prophecy (1:2-9) deals with the coming destruction of

INTRODUCTION

Samaria, with which imminent danger to Jerusalem is connected. This seems, of course, to require the dating of Micah before the fall of Samaria, which happened in 721 B.C. But nowhere, either in Assyrian or Biblical records, is there any suggestion of danger to Jerusalem and Judah in 721 B.C. Isaiah did not anticipate any trouble for Judah at that time. As a matter of fact, Samaria was not destroyed in 721 B.C. Neither in the Old Testament nor in Sargon's own narrative is there any mention of a destruction of Samaria. On the contrary, Sargon says, "more than before I caused it to be inhabited." Far from being annihilated, Samaria was found among the enemies of Sargon in 720 B.C. New colonies were planted in the province by Sargon in 715 B.C. and later by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (Ezra 4: 2, 9, 10). An Assyrian governor was resident in the city as late as 645 B.C. It is, therefore, by no means necessary to limit the period for Micah's appearance by the year 721 B.C.

The message of Micah may have been called forth by the situation at the time of Ashdod's revolt against Sargon in 713-711 B.C., or by the crisis at the time of Sennacherib's invasion in 701 B.C. It is not at all improbable that Samaria was involved in both of these rebellions. The materials in chaps. 1-3 seem to belong to one period, in that they reflect similar conditions throughout, and in view of the section 1: 10-16, which seems to lay out a line of march for Sennacherib's army, it is reasonable to interpret these chapters as called forth by that great occasion.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHAPS. 1-3

From 715 to 701 B.C., the political situation in Judah was one of turmoil. Assyria was in control of Judah and

of Syria as a whole. Her dominion involved the payment of heavy tribute by the subject peoples. The freedom-loving mountaineers of Judah fretted under the heavy burden. Syria at large was restless. Egypt, the nearest neighbor on the south and always eager to control Syria, was constantly adding fuel to the flame of discontent, in the hope of involving Assyria, her ancient rival, in such difficulties as would furnish Egypt herself opportunity to supplant Assyria in the control of the Mediterranean coast lands. The Ethiopian Shabaka founded a new dynasty in Egypt in 712 and brought that nation into a condition that rendered her a much more formidable foe for Assyria than she had hitherto been. Jerusalem under Hezekiah was inevitably drawn into the political whirlpool. Conflicting parties arose in Judah, particularly pro-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian groups. Notwithstanding the influence of the prophet Isaiah, the influence of Egypt prevailed in Syria's councils, and revolt was organized in Philistia in 713 and in Judah in 705 B.C. But it was all of no avail. Assyria speedily broke down all opposition, and the little peoples were more helplessly in her power than ever.

Social and economic conditions in Judah at this time were much like those in Israel as reflected in the prophecy of Amos. Notwithstanding, the heavy burden of taxation did not prevent the accumulation of wealth. Sennacherib thus records the plunder carried away by him from Jerusalem in 701 B.C.: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones, . . . large lapis lazuli, couches of ivory, thrones of elephant skin and ivory, ivory, ushu and urkarinu woods of every kind, and his daughters, his palace-women, male and female singers, to Nineveh, my royal city, I caused to be brought after me."

This is not an inventory of the possessions of a poverty-stricken nation.

The wealth of Judah, however, was not generally distributed. It was in the hands of a relatively small class. Nor was this aristocracy of wealth content with its holdings. The passion for riches had taken hold upon them. Everything had to give way to the attainment of this end. Justice, righteousness, and mercy find no place for themselves. The processes of law are made to work to the advantage of the rich as over against the poor. Judges sell their decisions (3: 11). The defenceless poor are deprived of their homesteads that the estates of the rich may be enlarged (2: 2, 9). No measures are too extreme in the mad race for wealth (3: 1-3). Even the ministers of religion are carried away by the craze and flatter the rich, while they denounce the poor (3: 5 ff., 11).

Materialism and commercialism bade fair to drive all respect for human rights from the field. The desire for power and display was stronger than the longing for nobility of character and beauty of soul. The ideal of the simple life which had been inherited from the nomadic ancestors was being crowded out by the lust for place and prestige. In the rush for the coveted prizes, the poor and weak were being ruthlessly trampled under foot. Their cry arose to heaven, whence came in return the call to Micah to step forward fearlessly as the spokesman and champion of the rights of the poor and the supremacy of the claims of Jehovah upon the life.

3. THE BACKGROUND OF CHAPS. 4-7

In passing from chap. 3 to chap. 4 of Micah, we enter a new world, or rather a series of them. For the most

part, the occurrence of the Exile is presupposed. The gaze is on the whole toward the future and the attitude is one of hope. The shortcomings of the present are both in the moral and the religious sphere. Idolatry is practised and cheating and lying are prevalent. But not enough details are given to enable us to place much of this material at any specific period in the exilic or post-exilic age. Nor is it possible to determine with any degree of assurance that the bulk of it belongs to any one age. It may easily have come together as the result of a slow process of accretion covering many generations. No definite portrayal of a specific historical background for the whole of chaps. 4-7 is at all possible. What may be ventured with regard to the individual sections of these prophecies will be found in the commentary upon these chapters.

IV. THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

The social note, so prominent in Amos, is struck again by Micah. It is the theme everywhere present, upon which new variations are continually wrought out. The thought of Micah is not new; yet he is much more than a mere repeater of other men's words. He speaks as a peasant in behalf of peasants. The wrongs of his neighbors are his own wrongs. He has toiled and suffered, hoped and prayed with the men of his community. They are all bound together by the fellowship of labor and pain. Micah's message reflects this common experience. His whole being quivers with feeling. There is nothing of the detached attitude of Amos; we are reminded rather of the personal passion of Hosea.

Micah was confronted by a religious attitude on the part of the ruling classes which made all his work difficult.

It was essentially the same as that with which Amos had had to contend. Its most definite formulation is furnished by Mic. 3: 11, viz. "Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Disaster cannot befall us." This absolute assurance of the favor of Jehovah toward Judah obstructed the way for the entrance of any far-reaching ethical truth. It represented an air-tight conservatism in religion, the preservation of which would have made all religious progress impossible. Its presupposition was that Judah was doing all that could reasonably be required in the service of Jehovah. Were not his offerings and sacrifices being faithfully sustained? Was not every ritualistic obligation zealously discharged? Yea, was not the letter of both ritual and moral law sedulously observed? The prescribed round of duties, as they themselves had defined it, was being daily fulfilled.

Micah ran athwart this smug, complacent attitude of mind with a more vital conception of God. He presented the claim of Jehovah upon his people as far more comprehensive and searching than they were willing to admit. To fulfil these stereotyped obligations of ritual and morals was not enough to guarantee the divine favor. Jehovah was a just and righteous God and demanded justice and righteousness on the part of his worshippers. Nor could this justice be content with mere conformity to legal requirements. It insisted upon a full recognition of human rights as such. A legality that made it possible for the rich to exploit the poor was abhorrent to Jehovah. To Micah the rustic, the luxury and vice of the city, involving as it did the poverty and degradation of the peasant, was the most terrible offence in the sight of Jehovah (1: 5). He demands such a conception of justice between man and man as will enable each to live his

own life in the full enjoyment of all the privileges and blessings to which his industry and ability entitle him.

Seeing no possibility of the establishment of such an ideal state of society under existing conditions, Micah sees no escape from the execution of the wrath of Jehovah upon his people. That punishment will affect the whole country-side, but it will fall with terrific force upon Samaria and Jerusalem (1:6; 3:12). These two cities are to be razed to the ground. This announcement is proof of the courage and independence of Micah. Never before had a prophet threatened Jerusalem with destruction. Such a catastrophe had been unthinkable. Was not Jehovah's temple there? Could, or would, Jehovah abandon his own sanctuary to desecration and destruction at the hands of the enemy? For Micah, Jehovah's interest in the establishment and enforcement of justice and right was far greater than his interest in any institution, even his own temple.

It is to be remembered, however, that to Micah's mind the destruction of Jerusalem did not necessarily mean the end of the nation. For him, an inhabitant of the rural hillside, the destinies of the nation were not bound up with the fate of the city. He may very well have thought of the future of his people as being in the hands of the country people. Certainly, whatever form his hope for the future may have taken, he had such a hope. His thought of God was not so broad and so detached from his own personal interests as to have made it possible for him to conceive of the total and final separation of Jehovah from his people. Indeed, no prophet ever arrived at that stage of thought. For all of them the bond between Jehovah and Israel was indissoluble and eternal. But Micah has left no record of the character of his con-

ception of the future. The message needed in his day was not one of hope and peace, but one of denunciation and threat.

The preaching of Micah evidently made a deep impression. It was remembered a hundred years later, and his experience was turned to good advantage in saving Jeremiah from the wrath of his foes (Jer. 26: 18). It was remembered, indeed, precisely because of the courage and daring it reflected. The astonishing prediction of the utter destruction of Jerusalem could not be forgotten.

The strength of Micah's message is attested in still another way; viz., by the accretions it received from time to time. The message of Micah could not be left unmodified and unchallenged. The last recorded word of a prophet of Jehovah could not be allowed to stand as an oracle of disaster. Hence later prophetic editors, at various times, added to the words of Micah words of their own, intended either as interpretations of Micah's standpoint or as supplementary prophecies, furnishing the vision of Messianic glory that was wholly lacking in the original message. These later additions are not to be depreciated because they were late. Some of them are equal in beauty of expression, depth of insight, and knowledge of truth to the best that is in Micah's own words. Those who seek for a correct diagnosis of the essence of true religion must always turn to the splendid utterance in Mic. 6: 6-8. And reading this and other similar words, we shall be protected from the common error of supposing that all creative religious thought came to an end with the Exile.

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A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF MICAH

I. THE SUPERScription 1:1

1:2

1. THE word of the LORD that came¹ to Micah the Morashtite² in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

II. THE DOOM OF ISRAEL, 1:2-9

2. Hear, ye peoples, all of you;³
Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:⁴
And let the Lord GOD be witness against you,⁵
the Lord from his holy temple.

¹ Gr. *and the word of the Lord came.* ² Syr. and Tg. *from Mareshah.* ³ Gr. *peoples words.* ⁴ Heb. *its fulness.* ⁵ m. *among.*

1. **Micah**; a name meaning, "who is like Jehovah?" **Morashtite**; *i.e.* a native of Moresheth; cf. 1:14. **In the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah**; we have no prophecies of Micah from the days of Jotham. His main activity was certainly in the reign of Hezekiah; cf. Jer. 26:18. See Introduction, § III. **Which he saw**; equivalent to *prophesied*; **saw** marks the revealed character of the prophet's message.

The superscription is probably from an editorial pen, perhaps the same that wrote the superscriptions to Isaiah and Hosea. The only point at which its accuracy need be questioned is the statement regarding the date of Micah's work.

2. **Ye peoples**, *i.e.* all the peoples of the earth, as is shown by the parallel address to **the earth**. The nations are summoned to witness Israel's judgment since from it they may take warning to themselves. **Witness against you**, *i.e.* the condemnation of Israel will appeal to the conscience of the heathen, who know themselves to be even more guilty than Israel. **His holy temple**,

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3. For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place,
and will come down, and tread¹ upon the high
places of the earth.
4. ^rAnd the mountains shall be molten under him,
and the valleys shall be cleft,²
As wax before the fire,
as waters that are poured down a steep place.
5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
and for the sins³ of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not
Samaria?
and what are the high places⁴ of Judah? are they
not Jerusalem?
6. Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap⁵ of the
field,
and as the plantings of a vineyard:
-

¹ Gr. omits *and tread*. ² Gr. *and the mountains will be shattered under him and the valleys melted*. ³ Gr. and Tg. *sin*. ⁴ Syr. *is the sin*. Gr. and Tg. *is the sin of the house*. ⁵ Gr. *the hut of a watcher*. Syr. *a country-house*.

i.e. his heavenly dwelling, not the temple in Jerusalem, as is shown by vss. 3, 4.

3-4. A description of Jehovah's manifestation of himself in punitive wrath. The imagery is based upon the observance of earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

5. **Jacob** is the Northern Kingdom. **Israel** should probably be changed to *Judah*, in view of the latter part of the verse where Samaria and Jerusalem are parallel. **Is it not Samaria?** As the headquarters of all the corruption of the nation, the capital city is named as representative of Israel's sin. **What are the high places of Judah?** This must be changed with the Syriac (cf. the Greek and Targum) to *what is the sin of Judah?* High places were not especially characteristic of Jerusalem; the parallelism with "transgression" calls for "sin"; and Micah was concerned with social wrongs rather than with matters of ritual. As a dweller in the country, Micah was shocked by the vice and injustice of the cities and realized too their baneful influence upon the country as a whole.

6. The destruction here foretold is to be total. Such a fate

And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,¹

and I will discover the foundations thereof.

7. And all her graven images shall be beaten to pieces,
and all her hires shall be burned with fire,
and all her idols will I lay desolate :

For of the hire of an harlot hath she gathered them,²
and unto the hire of an harlot shall they return.

¹ Gr. to chaos. Vg. like a stone-pile in a field. ² Syr., Tg. and Vg. have they been gathered.

did not befall Samaria till the days of John Hyrcanus (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII, 10, § 3), who destroyed it in 109 B.C. **The plantings of a vineyard**, *i.e.* a planted vineyard. This was the kind of ground least apt to be used for building purposes, because of the great amount of work and loss involved in the removal of the vines. **Into the valley**; Samaria was on a hill (1 Kings 16 : 24). **Discover**, *i.e.* uncover or lay bare.

7. This verse has been added to Micah's prophecy by an editor who interpreted the destruction of Samaria as a judgment upon idolatry. The vs. interrupts the connection between vs. 6 and vs. 8; the lamentation of vs. 8 is not on account of the destruction of the idols described in vs. 7, but because of the picture presented in vs. 6. Furthermore, Micah's grievance was against the perversion of the social order; it is therefore unlikely that he would make idolatry the chief reason for the fall of Samaria, as is done in vs. 7.

The idolatry of Samaria is a favorite topic in later prophecies; cf. Isa. 2 : 20; 10 : 10 f.; 27 : 9 f.; 30 : 22; 31 : 7. **Her hires**; better, *her images*. Burning is hardly a natural process to apply to wages; but it fits images admirably, whether made of solid metal or of wooden cores, overlaid with metal. This gives three words for "idol" in this verse; but Hebrew possesses at least twelve. **For of the hire of an harlot has she gathered them**; not that prostitution was the source of the many images, but that the prosperity ascribed to the favor of the Baalim made them possible; cf. Hos. 2 : 5. **And unto the hire of an harlot shall they return**; we may not ask a poet how idols that have been broken and burned could again be used for harlot's hire; cf. Job 1 : 21. He may be thinking of the fact that the conquering nation will carry off the idols of Samaria and present them as trophies before its own gods.

8. For this will I wail ¹ and howl,
 I will go stripped and naked:
 I will make a wailing like the jackals,
 and a mourning like the ostriches.
9. For her wounds are ² incurable:
 for it is come even unto Judah;
 It reacheth unto the gate of my people,
 even to Jerusalem.

III. LAMENTATION OVER ISRAEL'S DOOM, 1: 10-16

10. Tell it not in Gath,³
 weep not at all:⁴
 At Beth-le-Aphrah⁵ have I rolled myself ⁶ in the dust.

¹ Gr. has all verbs of this vs. in 3d pers. sing., Syr. in 2d pers. sing., and Tg. in 3d pers. plur. ² Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. *her wound is*. ³ Gr. *Those in Gath, do not enlarge*. Syr. *do not rejoice*. ⁴ Gr. *those in Akeim, do not build*. ⁵ Gr. *from house mockeries*. Syr. *in Beth-ophrah*. ⁶ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *roll yourselves*.

8. **For this**; viz. the downfall of Samaria, which, of course, not only appealed to the prophet as an Israelite interested deeply in the fate of the whole people but also because disaster to Samaria did but bring nearer the day of calamity to Jerusalem. **Stripped and naked**; better, *barefoot and stripped*, i.e. in the garb of a mourner or a captive; cf. 2 Sam. 15: 30; Isa. 20: 2-4. Assyrian bas-reliefs represent captives totally devoid of clothing; but the language here may imply merely the discarding of the outer garment. **Mourning like the ostriches**; the cry of this bird is a hideous screech.

9. **Her wounds are incurable**; rather, *her wound is incurable*, as in the versions. The prophet is referring to the disasters of 721 B.C. and the following years (see Introduction, § III), as full warrant for his grief. **For it is come even unto Judah**; this is the climax of his sorrow. **The gate of my people**; the central market of Judah and the seat of the highest legal authority, hence the natural gathering place of the clans. **Even to Jerusalem**; the situation before the prophet is probably that of the invasion by Sennacherib in 701 B.C., when Jerusalem seemed threatened by the same fate that had overtaken Samaria in 721 B.C.

The section 1: 10-16 is the most obscure and difficult in the whole book of Micah. This is largely due to the uncertainty of

11. Pass ye away,¹ O inhabitant of Shaphir,² in nakedness³ and shame:
The inhabitant of Zaanan is not come forth;
the wailing of Beth-ezel⁴ shall take from you the stay thereof.⁵
12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waiteth anxiously for good:⁶

¹ Gr. *your mockeries*. Syr. *serve for thyself*. ² Gr. *the one dwelling beautifully*; Vg. *beautiful habitation*. ³ Gr. *her cities*, and omits *and shame*. ⁴ Gr. (come forth) to *mourn the house next to her*. ⁵ m. *its standing place*. Gr. *from you a plague of pain*. Vg. *from you what stood for itself*. Syr. *from you its blow*. ⁶ m. *for . . . is in travail for good*. Gr. *who began for good to the one inhabiting pains?* Vg. *because the one dwelling in bitterness is weakened for good*. Syr. *because the inhabitant is weakened for good and has rebelled*.

the text, some suggestion of which is afforded by the foregoing array of variant readings.

10. **Tell it not in Gath**; a quotation from 2 Sam. 1:20, which indicates at the start the mournful character of this oracle. **Weep not at all**; this, if correct, must be ironical or sarcastic. But it is probably an error for an earlier reading which contained the name of a town corresponding to **Gath**; perhaps, *in Baca*, *weep bitterly*. Baca was a portion of the valley southwest of Jerusalem in the direction of Bethlehem. **Beth-le-Aphrah** is otherwise unknown and furnishes an isolated case of names of this formation. Perhaps we should change to *Beth-ophrah*, with the Syriac and Theodotion. **Have I rolled myself in the dust**; the first person seems out of place here, occurring not again until vs. 15, where it is representative of Jehovah. It is better to read with the versions, *roll yourselves*; this is an action expressive of the most extreme grief.

11. **Shaphir** is most probably identified with Sawafir, to the southeast of Ashdod. The captives from this town will **pass away** into exile, recognizable as captives by all on account of their **nakedness**; cf. note on 1:8. **Zaanan** is perhaps the same as Zenan (Josh. 15:37), in the Shephelah. **Is not come forth**, *i.e.* is shut up within its walls, afraid to venture out. **The wailing**; this is hard to interpret with the following words and perhaps represents some word for fortress, or the like, whence the citizens of Zaanan do not come forth. **Of Beth-ezel shall take from you the stay thereof**; this with the preceding wailing yields no satisfactory meaning. Taking 'wailing' with the previous sentence, we may restore the remainder, with slight difficulty, thus, *Beth-ezel*

- because evil is come down from the LORD unto the gate ¹ of Jerusalem.
13. Bind the chariot ² to the swift steed,³ O inhabitant of Lachish:
she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion;
for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.
14. Therefore shalt thou give a parting gift to Moresheth-gath.⁴
The houses of Achzib ⁵ shall be a deceitful thing
unto the kings of Israel.

¹ Gr., Syr. and Tg. *gates*. ² Gr. and Vg. *a noise of chariots*. ³ Gr. *and of riders*.
Vg. *of stupor*. ⁴ Gr. and Vg. *he will give emissaries as far as the inheritance of Gath*.
⁵ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *of deceit*.

is taken from its site; i.e. is razed to the ground. Its location is unknown, for it is nowhere else mentioned.

12. For the inhabitant of Maroth, etc.; better, with a little change of text, *How has the inhabitant of Maroth hoped for good!* But all to no purpose, for evil, *i.e. disaster, has come down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem.* Hence, Maroth, which is otherwise unknown, must have been not far removed from Jerusalem. The prophet is picturing the onward march of an invading army as it passes from point to point, leaving ruin in its trail.

13. Flight is urged upon the inhabitants of Lachish, which was situated sixteen miles northeast of Gaza and two miles south of Eglon. As a frontier fortress, it was a place of great strategic importance to Judah. She was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; nothing at all is known as to the reason for this judgment regarding Lachish. It may be that this is the prophetic opinion regarding the tribute sent by Hezekiah to Sennacherib at Lachish; cf. 2 Kings 18: 14-16. Israel here designates the whole people of which Judah was now the more important part.

14. A parting gift to Moresheth-gath; Judah is to lose one of her daughter villages into the hands of the enemy. The gift is that bestowed by a parent upon his daughter when she is married. Moresheth-gath seems to have been in the vicinity of Gath, hence near the Philistine border. Micah's appellation 'Morashite,' was probably due to this having been his home. If so, how his heart must have bled as he foretold the fate of his beloved village! The houses of Achzib; probably better *Beth-achzib*. Josh.

15. I will yet bring unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah
 him that shall possess thee :¹
 the glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam.²
16. Make thee bald, and poll thee for the children of thy
 delight :
 enlarge thy baldness³ as the eagle ;⁴ for they are
 gone into captivity from thee.

IV. THE WRONGS OF THE POOR, 2:1-11

2. Woe to them that devise⁵ iniquity and work evil
 upon their beds !

¹ Gr. *until they bring the inheritances, O inhabitress of Lachish; an inheritance.*
² Syr. *even for ever.* ³ Gr. *widowhood.* ⁴ m. *vulture.* ⁵ Gr. *they were devising.*

15: 44 locates Achzib somewhere in the Shephelah of Judah, in the neighborhood of Libnah, Keilah and Mareshah. What so unimportant a place could have done to warrant such a charge is unknown. **Achzib** and the word for **deceitful thing**, viz. *Achzab*, are so similar in sound as to suggest that the occasion for a pun may have been the prophet's chief reason for the charge.

15. **Mareshah** is represented in Palestine to-day either by Merâsh, two miles south of Beit-jibrin (the ancient Eleutheropolis), or by Tel-Sandahannah, one mile to the southeast of Merâsh. The play on words here is between Mareshah, which means *a possession*, and *yôresh* which means a *dispossessor*. **The glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam**; this is exceedingly difficult of interpretation, that usually adopted being, "Israel's nobles shall seek safety in a cave" (cf. 1 Sam. 22: 1 ff.). **Adullam** is probably the modern Id-el-mije, six miles northeast of Beit-jibrin. An attractive correction of the text here yields the following sense, *The glory of Israel will perish forever.*

16. **Make thee bald, and poll thee**; this is in token of mourning; cf. Jer. 31: 20. **The children of thy delight**; viz. the cities and villages she has lost. **As the eagle**; better rendered, *the vulture*, distinguished from the eagle by its bare head and neck. **For they are gone** (or, *will go*) **into captivity from thee**; the fate already announced for Northern Israel by Amos and Hosea is now threatened for Judah.

1. **Them that devise iniquity**; viz. the rich, who work out all kinds of nefarious schemes in order to increase their wealth.

- When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.¹
2. And they covet fields, and seize them² and houses, and take them away:
and they oppress a man and his house, even a man³ and his heritage.
 3. Therefore thus saith the LORD:
Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, Neither shall ye walk haughtily;⁴
for it is an evil time.
 4. In that day shall they take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation,⁵ and say,⁶

¹ Gr. because they lifted not their hands to God. Syr. because they lifted their hands against God. Vg. because their hand is against God. Aquila, because his hand is strong.
² Syr. omits and seize them. Gr. and rob orphans. ³ Syr. omits a man and. ⁴ Gr. adds suddenly. ⁵ m. with the lamentation, It is done. Gr. and a lamentation will be lamented in melody. ⁶ Gr. saying. Vg. of those saying.

Upon their beds, *i.e.* they lie awake at night pondering upon how they can get the better of the poor. **When the morning is light;** they improve the earliest hours of daylight to put their wicked plans into practice. **Because it is in the power of their hand;** or better, *because it is in their power; i.e.* they do wrong because they can do so with impunity.

2. **They covet fields, and seize them;** to wish for them is to take them. Their desire knows no restraint. The prophet does not detail the steps of the process of seizure, *e.g.* through foreclosure of mortgages, usurious rates of interest, bribery of judges, and the like. No legal procedure can make right in Micah's eyes the fact that his poor neighbors are being ousted from their homesteads by the grasping rich; cf. 1 Kings 21; Hos. 5: 10; Isa. 5: 8. **They oppress (or, crush) a man and his house, etc.;** his property gone, home, family, and man, too, follow it to ruin.

3. In vs. 1-2, Micah has expressed his own judgment of the sins of the rich. Now Jehovah speaks in his own person. **Do I devise;** not iniquity, as the rich do, but **an evil, i.e.** a calamity, which will rest upon the wicked like a heavy burden, beneath which they are bowed down to the earth. **For it is an evil time;** better, *for it will be a disastrous time.*

4. **In that day;** viz. the coming day of Jehovah, when he will

We be utterly spoiled: he changeth¹ the portion of my people;

how doth he remove *it*² from me!³ to the rebellious he divideth⁴ our fields.

5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast the line by lot⁵ in the congregation of the LORD.

6. Prophecy ye not, *thus* they prophesy.⁶

They shall not prophesy⁷ to these:⁸ reproaches shall not depart.⁹

¹ Gr. *was measured by line*; similarly Syr. ² m. *how doth he depart*. Gr. *and not was there one hindering him from departing*. ³ Syr. *omits from me*. ⁴ Gr. *were divided*. Syr. *with the measuring line*. ⁵ Syr. *none who will measure by line and divide by lot*. ⁶ m. *prophecy ye not, they are ever prophesying, say they*. Gr. and Syr. *prophecy ye not with tears*. Vg. *prophecy ye not, speaking*. ⁷ Syr. *you shall not prophesy*. Vg. *he will not drop*. ⁸ m. *of these things; their reproaches never cease*. ⁹ Vg. *will not overtake*. Syr. *not overtake you*.

bring judgment upon the wicked. Shall they take up a parable against you, etc.; better, with some change of text, *a taunt song will be raised concerning you and a lament will be wailed, saying*; the observers of the disaster will break out in sarcastic words of triumph at the expense of suffering Judah. We be utterly spoiled, etc.; the text of this latter part of the vs. is in bad disorder. It should probably be restored so as to read, *the portion of my people is measured with the measuring line and there is none to restore it; to our captors our land is allotted; we are utterly devastated*. These are words spoken by the foe, who ironically assume the rôle of suffering Judah, speaking in the name of her people. They mourn over the loss of their territory, which has been seized by the foe.

5. This vs. is best treated as a later note attached to Micah's words by some reader. It has no close connection with either vs. 4 or vs. 6; nor does it possess any poetical quality, either in form or content, such as would show its allegiance to its context. **Thou shalt have**; some individual or some group within the nation is evidently addressed. **To cast the line by lot**; an expression nowhere else found. It seems to refer to the laying out of the boundaries of landed property. There will be no more of this, for the entire land will have been seized by the foe. **The congregation** is here the entire nation.

6. **Prophecy ye not**, etc.; this text is in bad condition, being but a series of meaningless repetitions. It is better to correct it

7. Shall it be said,¹ O house of Jacob, Is the spirit of the LORD straitened? ² are these his doings? Do not my words³ do good to him that walketh uprightly? ⁴
8. But of late⁵ my people is risen up as an enemy: ye strip the robe⁶ from off the garment⁷ from them that pass by securely⁸ as men averse from war.⁹

¹ m. *O thou that art named the house of Jacob.* Gr. *the one saying, the house of Jacob has angered the spirit of the Lord.* ² m. *impatient.* ³ Gr. *my words.* ⁴ Gr. *do good and walk straight.* ⁵ Heb. *yesterday.* ⁶ Gr. *his skin.* ⁷ Gr. and Syr. *against his peace.* ⁸ Gr. *to take away hope.* ⁹ Gr. *a ruin of war.* Syr. *and ye turn to war.*

so as to read, *Do not keep on prophesying such things.* The opponents of the prophet bid him cease; they are weary of his message. Similar prohibitions had met former prophets; cf. Am. 2:12; 5:10; 7:10 ff. **Reproaches shall not depart. Shall it be said, O house of Jacob;** here again the text demands correction. The following calls for the omission of one word found in the Hebrew, *Shame cannot overtake the house of Jacob.* The prophet's opponents are still speaking and they resent his threat of destruction upon Israel; it is an unheard of thing; cf. 3:11; Am. 3:2. The phrase **shall it be said** is better read *the one speaking or the speaker*, and regarded as a marginal note intended to indicate the "house of Jacob" or its representatives as uttering this statement.

7. **Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?** *i.e.* is Jehovah impatient? Do we not know him to be long-suffering and infinite in mercy? The prophet's critics continue to speak. **Are these his doings?** Would he do such things as you foretell? By no means. **Do not my words;** better *his words.* **Do good to him that walketh uprightly;** better, *do good to Israel.* The self-satisfied people, secure in the consciousness of Jehovah's favor to his own people, ask Micah if Jehovah's words do not always mean prosperity for Israel. Can any other message be conceivable?

8. The prophet's answer to the protest of vs. 6 and 7 is now made. The Hebrew text of this verse is badly broken. A literal rendering would give, *formerly my people as an enemy raised up* (or, *raised up an enemy*); *from before a garment a cloak ye strip from those passing by* (*in*) *confidence, returned from war.* Even this, with its imperfect sense, involves serious grammatical difficulty. A better reading is, *but ye have become my people's foe, ye rise up against them that are at peace; ye strip off from those passing by in confidence booty of war.* These words are addressed

9. The women¹ of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses ;
 from their young children ye take away² my glory for ever.³
10. Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest :
 because of uncleanness that destroyeth,⁴ even with a grievous destruction.
11. If a man walking in wind and falsehood⁵ do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink ; he shall even be the prophet⁶ of this people.

¹ Gr. *those leading*. ² Gr. *because the wicked works were driven out; ye draw near*.
³ Gr. *to the mountains*. ⁴ Gr. *ye shall be destroyed*. ⁵ m. *in a spirit of falsehood*.
⁶ Gr. *be of the drop*. Vg. *upon whom it is dropped*.

to the wicked leaders of the people, who are accused of being shepherds who devour the sheep. They take advantage of their position to rob the defenceless and unsuspecting public ; cf. 3 : 5.

9. The women of my people, etc. ; in their lust for land and wealth, they do not shrink from driving women and children out of their homes into beggary and starvation. My glory ; probably a term for the fathers who as yeomen of Israel are the glory of Jehovah.

10. Now the prophet breaks out with the sentence of exile. This is not your rest, or *resting-place*. Those who have expelled others are now in turn to be expelled and that not merely from their homes, but from their country. Because of uncleanness that destroyeth, etc. ; a better reading is, *because of uncleanness, ye shall be destroyed with*, etc. Men who were doubtless rigid in their adherence to the ritualistic requirements of clean and unclean are here notified that because of the uncleanness of their hearts destruction is coming upon them.

11. This vs. is, like vs. 5, probably a later addition to Micah's words. It lacks connection with the immediate context and it is not poetry in any sense, as the context is. Walking in wind and falsehood ; or, *in a spirit of falsehood*, i.e. one whose whole conduct is false, upon whom no reliance can be placed. Of wine and strong drink, i.e. a prophet who would promise an abundance of sensuous, materialistic blessings, such as these, would at once be accepted as the prophet of this people, without any challenge.

V. THE EXILES' RETURN, 2:12, 13

12. I will surely assemble,¹ O Jacob, all of thee;²
 I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
 I will put them³ together as the sheep of Bozrah:⁴
 as a flock in the midst of their pasture,
 they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of men*.
13. The breaker is gone up⁵ before them:
 they have broken forth and passed on to the gate,⁶
 and are gone out thereat:
 And their king is passed on before them,
 and the LORD at the head of them.

¹ Gr. *shall be gathered*. ² Gr. *with all*. ³ Gr. *I will put his return*. ⁴ Gr. and Syr. *in affliction*. Vg. *in a sheepfold*. ⁵ Gr. *on account of the breach*. ⁶ Syr. omits *to the gate*.

The people are given over to sensuous pleasures, having no true thought of God before their eyes.

These vss. (2:12-13) are quite generally conceded to be of exilic or post-exilic origin. They do not connect with the context. They presuppose the exile as an existing state, from which deliverance is promised; and they lay down no conditions regarding character as a prerequisite to that deliverance. All this is in marked contrast with Micah's point of view.

12. **The remnant of Israel**, which is now scattered among the nations. **Put them together**, *i.e.* the widely scattered groups of exiles will be brought together. **As the sheep of Bozrah**; better, with a slight change of reading, *like sheep in the fold*. **As a flock**, etc.; this and the preceding figure suggest Jehovah's protecting care of his people. **They shall make great noise**, etc.; literally, *they shall roar because of men*, *i.e.* they will be crowded with people; cf. Isa. 17:12.

13. **The breaker is gone up before them**; better, *will go up*. Jehovah will go before his people like the ram of the flock to break down every barrier and surmount every obstacle. **They have broken forth and passed on to the gate**; better, *will break forth and pass through*, in the wake of their leader, *and will go out thereat*, rather than *are gone out*. **And their king is passed on**; better, *will pass on*. "Their king" is, of course, Jehovah himself.

VI. THE SINS OF LEADERS AND PROPHETS, 3: 1-8

3. And I¹ said, Hear,² I pray you, ye heads of Jacob,³
and rulers⁴ of the house of Israel:
Is it not for you to know judgement?
2. who hate the good, and love the evil;
Who pluck off their skin from off them,
and their flesh from off their bones;
3. Who also⁵ eat the flesh of my people;
and they flay their skin from off them, and break
their bones:
Yea, they chop them in pieces, as for⁶ the pot,
and as flesh within the caldron.
4. Then⁷ shall they cry unto the LORD,
but he will not answer them:

¹ Gr. and Syr. *he*. ² Gr. and Syr. add *this*, as in vs. 9. ³ Gr., Syr. and Tg. *house of Jacob*, as in vs. 9. ⁴ Gr. *the rest*; so also in vs. 9. ⁵ Gr. *in what way they*.
⁶ Gr. *like flesh for*. ⁷ Gr. *so*.

For the promise is for a time when they no longer have an earthly king. For other allusions to Jehovah as king, cf. Jer. 22 2; Zeph. 3: 15; Isa. 33: 22; 41: 21; Ps. 89: 18.

1. **And I said**; this phrase lacks all connection with any prior statement. Either some foregoing context has been lost, or it is merely a marginal note by some reader. **Hear**, etc.; this address is practically identical with that in vs. 9; both here and there, as appears from vs. 10, those addressed are the officials of Judah in general and of Jerusalem, in particular. **Know judgement**, or *justice*; those in power are under especial obligation to manifest the principles of justice in all their dealings.

2. This and the following vs. express Micah's judgment of the rulers' motives, which is based upon their conduct. The highly figurative language is intended to convey a vivid impression of the heartlessness and brutality of those in power. The poor were a prey for the rich and existed only to be exploited.

3. **As for the pot**; better, with the Greek, *like meat for the pot*.

4. **Then**, *i.e.* in the coming judgment; cf. 2: 3, 4, 10. **Will hide his face**; a common figure for the displeasure of God; cf.

Yea, he will hide his face from them at that time,
according as¹ they have wrought evil in their
doings.²

5. Thus saith the LORD

concerning the prophets that make my people to err ;
that bite with their teeth and cry, Peace ;

And whoso putteth not into their mouths,
they even prepare war³ against him :

6. Therefore it shall be night unto you, that ye shall
have no vision ;

and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine ;

And the sun shall go down upon the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them.

¹ Gr. *and*. Syr. *because*. ² Gr. *they have dealt wickedly in their practices against themselves*. ³ Gr. *stirred up war*.

Isa. 1: 15; 8: 17; Deut. 31: 17 f.; 32: 20; Job 13: 24; Ps. 13: 1. **According as**; better, *inasmuch as*. **They have wrought evil in their doings**; or, *have made their deeds evil*.

5. Vss. 5-8 are concerned with a new class of offenders, the prophets of the day. To Micah, they seem a class of self-seekers and impostors; he himself is the only true prophet. As a matter of fact, a more generous judgment would regard them as a set of men in the main sincere enough, but dominated by a too narrow patriotism and a too low conception of God. Hence their interpretation of the events of the day differed radically from Micah's. Some of them, no doubt, were consciously abusing their office, by seeking personal gain thereby.

That bite with their teeth and cry, Peace; or, *when they bite with their teeth, they preach peace*, i.e. when they are well fed they prophesy prosperity. **Prepare war against him**; literally, *sanctify* or *consecrate war*, all battles being begun under the auspices of religious ceremonies. Here, the language is figurative; the prophets band themselves together against those who refuse them support, and stir up public opinion against them to the detriment of their social and business standing.

6. The darkness threatened is that of the great day of Jehovah (cf. Am. 5: 18), which will stagger the shallow optimism of these prophets and paralyze their too facile tongues.

7. And the seers shall be ashamed,
and the diviners confounded;
Yea, they shall all cover their lips:¹
for there is no answer of God.²
8. But³ I truly am full of power by⁴ the spirit of the
LORD,
and of judgement, and of might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression,
and to Israel his sin.

VII. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM, 3:9-12

9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,
and rulers⁵ of the house of Israel,
That abhor judgement,
and pervert all equity.
10. They build⁶ up Zion with blood,
and Jerusalem with iniquity.
11. The heads thereof judge for reward,
and the priests thereof teach⁷ for hire,

¹ Gr. *all speak against them.* ² Gr. *no one answering them.* Syr. *God is not answering them.* ³ Gr. *except.* ⁴ m. *even.* ⁵ Gr. *and the rest of,* as in vs. 1. ⁶ Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. *who build.* ⁷ Gr. *answered.*

7. Cover their lips, or *the upper lip*; this was a common sign of mourning; cf. Ezek. 24: 17, 22; Lev. 13: 45. The worst grief, amid all the sorrows of that great day, will be the fact that Jehovah will not respond to their cry.

8. But I, in distinction from the weak, vacillating prophets just described, am full of power, being filled with the spirit of the Lord, to the end that the sins of Israel may be revealed in all their heinousness.

9. That abhor judgement, etc.; their conduct shows an irreconcilable antagonism between them and justice.

10. Micah denounced the prosperity and progress that are founded upon the exploitation of the poor. Their life-blood has gone into the making of the city.

11. Reward, *i.e.* a bribe. The decisions of the courts are for

And the prophets thereof divine for money:
 yet will they lean upon the LORD and say,
 Is not the LORD in the midst of us?
 No evil shall come upon us.

12. Therefore shall Zion for your sake
 be plowed as a field,
 And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
 and the mountain of the house as the high places¹
 of a forest.

¹ Symmachus and Theodotion, *as a height*. Gr. *a grove*. Syr. *a wooded region*.

sale to the highest bidder. Even the ministers of religion are mad for money. There is no honest setting forth of truth and right, regardless of fear or favor. **Yet will they lean upon the Lord**, etc.; they are apparently unconscious of any breach between their conduct and Jehovah's demands. This blind confidence in Jehovah's readiness to defend his people on every occasion was the barrier between the general public and men like Micah. His words sounded like treason and disloyalty to Jehovah in the ears of the people. They were performing the ritual zealously and were adhering to the old and long-established customs and laws; what more could be expected of them? Micah and the like were impracticable idealists, with new demands that had neither rhyme nor reason. Against this sort of thing, the great prophets, from Amos to Micah, insisted that Jehovah's prime requirement was ethical; that justice was even dearer to him than his people were; cf. Isa. 1:10-17; Am. 5:21-27; Hos. 6:6.

12. **Zion** is here the city of Jerusalem as a whole; Zion proper (2 Sam. 5:6-9) was on the southern slope of the hill to the east of the Tyropœon valley. **For your sake**; because of your sins, total destruction will befall Jerusalem. **The house**, viz. of Jehovah; this is the climax of disaster. The very temple itself, upon which they counted so much for protection (cf. Jer. 7:1 ff.), is doomed to destruction by Jehovah. **As the high places of a forest**; better, *the high place*, with the versions, or, *a wooded height*. The spot now trod by the feet of many worshippers will be so deserted that it will be like the solitudes of the dense forest. This threat of Micah's was long remembered; cf. Jer. 26:18.

Vss. 1-3 of this passage are repeated in Isa. 2:2-4; but there are twelve variations between the two, none of which, however, materially affects the sense. The passage is best understood as

VIII. THE WORLD AT ISRAEL'S FEET, 4: 1-5

4. But in the latter days it shall come to pass,
 that the mountain of the LORD's house¹ shall be
 Established in the top² of the mountains,
 and it shall be exalted above the hills;
 And peoples shall flow unto it.
2. and many nations shall go and say,
 Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the
 LORD,
 and to the house of the God of Jacob;
 And he will teach us of his ways,³
 and we will walk in his paths:
 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,⁴
 and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

¹ Gr. omits *house*. ² m. *at the head*. ³ Gr. *us his way*. ⁴ m. *instruction*.

coming from the post-exilic age. The centralization of worship at Jerusalem and the pilgrimage thither of the nations of the world are ideas of later origin than the age of Isaiah and Micah. Nor is this passage easily harmonized with the threat of total destruction announced to Jerusalem in the immediately preceding vs., 3: 12.

1. **But** is in Hebrew *and*; the rendering **but** is due to a desire to establish a connection with chap. 3. Yet before that promised in 4: 1 ff. could come to pass, it would be necessary for Judah to repent of its evil ways. Such a prerequisite is lacking here. **In the latter days**, *i.e.* at the end of the existing dispensation and at the opening of the Messianic age. **The mountain**, *etc. i.e.* Mt. Zion. **In the top of the mountains**; better, *at the top*, *etc.*, with the margin. This, with the following, **exalted**, *etc.*, does not imply an actual physical elevation of Mt. Zion, but rather an elevation in honor and reverence, as the site of the greatest of all sanctuaries.

2. This vs. presupposes the existence of the law of Deut. 12, centralizing all worship at Jerusalem, and thus points to the late origin of this passage. **The law**; better, with the margin, *instruction*; not referring to the law of Moses so much as the religion and the prophetic teaching in general.

3. And he shall judge between¹ many² peoples,
and shall reprove³ strong nations afar off;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruninghooks:
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
4. But they shall sit every man under his vine
and under his fig tree;
And none shall make them afraid:
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken
it.
5. For all the peoples will walk⁴ every one in the name
of his god,⁵
and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God
for ever and ever.

¹ m. among. ² m. great. ³ m. decide concerning. ⁴ m. peoples walk. ⁵ Gr. every one his way.

3. Just as the priest of Jehovah now settles all difficult questions in litigation among Jehovah's people, so in the Messianic age Jehovah will arbitrate all the disputes of the nations, and war will thus disappear from the face of the earth. **Reprove**; better, *arbitrate for*. This ideal of universal peace was cherished among a people left shattered by calamitous wars.

4. Instead of fighting, perfect peace and calmest confidence will prevail. There will be no cause for alarm.

5. This vs. is a later comment on vss. 1 ff. and comes from a practical man, who is doubtful of the possibility of the foregoing ideal being speedily realized. **For all the peoples will walk**; better, *though all the peoples walk*. **And we will walk**; better, *yet we will walk*. This writer expresses the determination to be loyal to the religion of Jehovah through all time, no matter even if the nations persist in their idolatry and refuse to turn and follow Jehovah.

This passage (4:6-10) probably belongs to the period shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 597 or 586 B.C. If vss. 9-10 might be transposed to precede vss. 6-8, the whole section would become logically unified, the order of events being siege, exile, return, and restoration.

IX. EXILE AND RESTORATION, 4: 6-10

6. In that day, saith the LORD,
 will I assemble her that halteth,¹
 And I will gather her that is driven away,
 and her that I have afflicted;²
7. And I will make her that halted a remnant,
 and her that was cast far off³ a strong nation:
 And the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion⁴
 from henceforth even for ever.
8. And thou, O tower of the flock,⁵
 the hill⁶ of the daughter of Zion,
 Unto thee shall it come; yea, the former dominion
 shall come,
 the kingdom⁷ of the daughter of Jerusalem.⁸

¹ Syr. and Tg. *the distant ones.* ² Gr. *and those whom I drove away.* ³ Vg. *her that had labored.* ⁴ Syr. adds *and in Jerusalem.* ⁵ m. *Eder* (cf. Gen. 35: 21). ⁶ Gr. *squalid one.* Vg. *gloomy one.* Syr. *dark.* ⁷ Gr. adds *from Babylon.* ⁸ Tg. *Israel.*

6. **In that day**; the day of Jehovah, as in 4: 1, here marking the end of the Exile. The descriptions of this vs. apply to the exiled community as a whole, not to the individual members of it. Cf. Zeph. 3: 19.

7. The fact that **remnant** is here made parallel to **strong nation** shows that the two are thought of as practically equivalent and points to late origin for the passage. **Her that was cast far off**; better, with a slight change of text, *her that was sick*. **The Lord shall reign**; no human king as in days gone by; cf. Isa. 24: 23; 52: 7. **From henceforth**; the Messianic age is thought of as just about to dawn.

8. **Tower of the flock**; Jerusalem is likened to the watch-tower overlooking the sheepfold whence the shepherd kept a look-out for wild beasts; cf. Numb. 32: 16; 2 Chron. 26: 10. **Unto thee shall it come**, etc.; a better arrangement of words yields, *unto thee shall come the first dominion; yea, there shall come the kingdom*, etc. The reference is probably to the days of David and Solomon; and the promise to Jerusalem thus is that she shall once more be the capital of all Israel. **The daughter of Jerusalem**; it is tempting to read, with the Targum, *kingdom of*

9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? ¹
 Is there no king in thee,
 Is thy counsellor perished,
 that pangs have taken hold of thee as of a woman
 in travail?
10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth,² O daughter
 of Zion, like a woman in travail:
 for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and
 shalt dwell in the field,
 And shalt come even unto Babylon; there shalt
 thou be rescued; ³
 there shall the LORD ⁴ redeem thee from the hand
 of thine enemies.

¹ Gr. *thou know evil*. Syr. *thou do evil*. Vg. *art thou contracted with mourning*. Tg. *connect thyself with peoples*. ² Gr. *be in pain and be a man and draw nigh*. Vg. *be in pain and be content*. ³ Gr. *there he will redeem thee*. ⁴ Gr. *adds thy God*.

the house of Israel, which is a meaning parallel to that of *first dominion*.

9. Cry aloud, *i.e.* in anguish. The "daughter of Zion" is addressed. The city is evidently in terror, in view of a threatening attack. Is there **no king**, etc.; an ironical question, probably, intended to emphasize the helplessness and uselessness of the king and his advisers in the approaching crisis. **Pangs have taken hold of thee**, etc.; a figure intended to represent most excruciating suffering; cf. Jer. 6:24; 22:23.

10. An expansion of the figure in vs. 9. Having asked them in irony, why Zion grieves, here in all seriousness, it is said, "thou hast every reason to grieve." **Now**, *i.e.* soon. **Go forth**, etc.; from the protection of the walled city to the open, unprotected country, exposed to inclement weather, wild beasts, and wilder men. **And shalt come even unto Babylon**; this is clear proof of late origin. Micah and his contemporaries were concerned with Assyria, and its capital, Nineveh, not with Babylon, which did not rise to power until after 607, when Nineveh fell. Some scholars, therefore, in order to save the vs. for Micah, drop this sentence; but it is needed as an antecedent for the following **there**. **Shalt thou be rescued**; this certainty of deliverance which never deserted the prophets of the exilic and post-exilic age is one of the most remarkable and splendid things in the Hebrew religion. The prophetic faith in Jehovah stopped at nothing.

X. ISRAEL'S TRIUMPH, 4: 11-5: 1

11. And now many nations are assembled against thee,
that say, Let her be defiled,¹
and let our eye see *its desire*² upon Zion.
12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD,
neither understand they his counsel:
for he hath gathered them as the sheaves³ to the
threshing-floor.
13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion:
for I will make thine horn iron,
and I will make thy hoofs brass:

¹ Gr. *let us rejoice over*. Vg. *let her be stoned*. ² m. *gaze*. ³ Vg. *hay*; Syr. *ears of grain*. Aquila and Symmachus, *chaff*.

Vss. 11-13 reflect a different situation from that of vss. 9-10. In both cases, Jerusalem is besieged; but in vss. 9-10 she was captured and her citizens carried captive; here she turns upon her besiegers and with Jehovah's aid destroys them. There Babylon was the enemy; here it is the pagan world in general. The point of view of the prophecy is post-exilic. 5: 1, on the other hand, is an independent fragment describing some actual siege, rather than a prophetic vision as in vss. 11-13. It may well have come from Micah's prophecies at the time of Sennacherib's invasion; but there is no definite evidence of any specific date.

11. The gathering of the nations against Jerusalem is a characteristic of late prophecy; cf. Ezek. chaps. 38-39; Isa. 41: 11-16; Zeph. 3: 8. **Let her be defiled**, *i.e.* by the tread of foreign armies; cf. Joel 3: 17; Isa. 24: 5; Numb. 35: 33. **Let our eye see its desire upon**; or *fasten upon*, gloat triumphantly over Zion.

12. The foes have reckoned without their host. Jehovah's plans are other than theirs. In similar fashion, Isa. 10: 5-19 pictures the Assyrian unconsciously fulfilling Jehovah's purpose against Israel, only to become the victim of Jehovah's wrath later on himself. **For he hath gathered them**; or *that*, etc.; this is the content of Jehovah's plan.

13. **Arise and thresh**; Judah is to be Jehovah's agent in the execution of his will against the nations. She who has been trodden under foot of the Gentiles so long will at last have her day.

And thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples :
and thou shalt devote¹ their gain unto the LORD,
and their substance unto the Lord of the whole
earth.

5. Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter
of troops:²
he hath³ laid siege against us:
they shall smite the judge⁴ of Israel with a rod
upon the cheek.

XI. THE MESSIAH, 5: 2-4

2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah,⁵
which art little⁶ to be⁷ among the thousands⁸ of
Judah,

¹ Heb. *I shall devote.* Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. *thou shalt devote.* ² Gr. *will the daughter be stopped by a barrier.* Syr. *thou wilt go forth in a troop, O daughter of troops.* Vg. *thou wilt be devastated, O daughter of robbery.* ³ Syr., Vg. and Tg. *they have.* ⁴ Syr. *the shepherd.* Gr. *the gate.* ⁵ Gr. *Bethlehem house of Ephrathah.* ⁶ Gr. *thou art least.* ⁷ Vg. omits *to be.* ⁸ m. *families.*

Thy horn; the figure of the ox treading out the grain is here used; but the **horn** is suggestive of goring rather than threshing. The iron horn and bronze hoofs are representative of the invincibility of Judah as Jehovah's agent. **Thou shalt devote their gain**, *i.e.* the spoil taken from them by Israel will be wholly given up as an offering to Jehovah; cf. Josh. 6: 17-19, 24; Exod. 22: 19; Judg. 1: 17.

1. **Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops**; better, with an easy change of text, *now art thou cutting thyself severely.* Jerusalem is addressed and described as indulging in a custom characteristic of mourners and those in great distress; cf. Deut. 14: 1; 2 Kings 18: 28. **He**; better, with the versions, *they.* **Against us**; the speaker identifies himself with his suffering countrymen. **They shall smite**; better, in the present tense, *they smite.* The treatment described was a gross insult; cf. 1 Kings 22: 24; Job 16: 10. It may refer either to such insults as were heaped upon Hezekiah by the Assyrian, or to the speaker's conviction that the insults of the foe were offensive to Israel's greater king, Jehovah of hosts.

This section (5: 2-4) is most easily explained as coming from the

Out of thee shall one come forth unto me
that is to be ruler in Israel ;

Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.¹

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth: then the residue of his brethren shall return unto² the children of Israel.

¹ m. from ancient days.

² m. with.

period when Messianic hopes were centring in Zerubbabel just after the Exile.

2. **Beth-lehem Ephrathah**; better, *Beth-ephrathah*, as appears from the Gr. and from the metre. In Math. 2:6, "Bethlehem, the land of Judah." But the identification of Beth-ephrathah with Bethlehem is correct as appears from the mention of Judah in the next line and from the evident allusion here to the Davidic dynasty which sprang from Bethlehem, and from the association of Bethlehem with Ephrathah in other passages; cf. 1 Sam. 17:12; Ruth 1:2; 4:11; 1 Chron. 2:19, 50; 4:4. Ephrathah was either the district in which, or the clan to which, Bethlehem belonged. **Which art little to be among the thousands of Judah**; better, with a necessary correction of text, *which art least among the clans of Judah*. But notwithstanding the numerical and political insignificance of Beth-ephrathah, **out of thee shall one come forth unto me** (better, *for me*) **that is to be ruler in** (or *over*) **Israel**. This promise implies that at the time of its utterance there was no king in Israel; thus the date is exilic. **Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting**; better, *whose origins are from of old, from ancient days*. This points to birth in one of the ancient families, viz. the Davidic; cf. Ezek. 24:23 f.; 37:24 f.; Hos. 3:5.

3. This vs. seems to be a prosaic gloss upon vs. 2 and 4. The connection with vs. 2 is very loose; there is no antecedent for the pronoun *them*; and the subject is left very indefinite. The thought of the vs. is, "since Jehovah is going to raise up a great king for his people, it is clear that the present distress is only temporary and will cease when the promised Messiah comes." **Will he give them up**, *i.e.* Jehovah will abandon his people to their foes. **She who travaileth hath brought forth**; better, *she who is to travail shall have borne*. Apparently an allusion to the promise of Isa. 7:14, which is interpreted here as referring to the birth of the Messiah. **Then the residue of his brethren, etc.**;

4. And he shall stand,¹ and shall feed *his flock* in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God:
 And they shall abide;² for now shall he³ be great
 unto the ends of the earth.

XII. ISRAEL'S PROTECTION, 5:5-6

5. And this *man*⁴ shall be *our* peace:
 when the Assyrian shall come into our⁵ land,
 and when he shall tread in our palaces,⁶

¹ Gr. adds *he shall see*. ² Syr., Vg., Tg. *they shall turn*. Gr. *they will begin*. ³ Gr. *they*. ⁴ Syr. omits *this man*; *man* is lacking in Heb. ⁵ Gr. *your*. ⁶ Gr. *upon your ground*.

better, *and the rest of his brethren*, etc. The Exile is here looked upon as an existing fact; with the advent of the Messiah, the whole Hebrew family will be reunited in its old home. The pronoun **his** is ambiguous; it may refer to the Messiah, or to Judah as distinguished from Northern Israel, or even to Shear-jashub of Isa. 7:3.

4. Vs. 2 is here resumed. **He** is the Messianic prince. **Stand**, *i.e.* be steadfast, immovable, **in the strength of the Lord**; not that of his people, nor of himself, but that of Jehovah. **And they shall abide**; it is hard to find any place for this here; there is no antecedent for **they**, for the words **his flock** of the preceding sentence are not in the Hebrew. It is probably a marginal note by some reader who wished to say that the flock of Jehovah would now have a permanent habitation whence they should go no more out for ever. **For now shall he be great**, etc.; a convincing manifestation of the strength of Jehovah as exercised through his Messiah.

This section (5:5-6) is independent of the foregoing, as appears from the fact that the Messiah who dominates there is lost sight of here and yields his place to a multiplicity of leaders. There the dominion of the Messiah is world-wide; here Judah is liable to encroachment from Assyria. This passage too is of late origin, being governed by the apocalyptic point of view rather than the historical.

5. **And this man shall be our peace**: when the Assyrian shall come into our land; better, with an easy change of text, *and this shall be our protection from Assyria: when he comes into our land*.

Then shall we raise¹ against him seven shepherds,
and eight principal² men.

6. And they shall waste³ the land of Assyria with
the sword,
and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof:⁴
And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian,
when he cometh into our land,
and when he treadeth within our border.

XIII. THE IRRESISTIBLE MIGHT OF THE REMNANT, 5:7-9

7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be⁵ in the midst of
many peoples

¹ Gr. *shall there be raised up*. ² Gr. *bites of*. ³ m. *eat up, or be shepherds over*.
⁴ Gr. *in its ditch*. Syr. *in his wrath*. Vg. *with its lances*. ⁵ Gr. and Syr. add *among the nations*, as in vs. 8.

The mention of Assyria does not indicate pre-exilic origin for this prophecy; for the name Assyria was applied to the successors of Assyria long after the downfall of Assyria. In Lam. 5:6, it is applied to Babylon; in Ezra 6:22, to Persia; and in Zech. 10:11, to Syria. The name given by the Talmud to the Aramaic script used throughout the regions formerly controlled by Assyria was "the Assyrian writing"; and Herodotus, VII, 63, declares the names Assyria and Syria to be synonymous. **Tread in our palaces**; better, following the Greek, *tread upon our soil*. **Seven shepherds, and eight principal men**, *i.e.* there will be all the leaders that may be needed; in contrast with the speaker's present, when leadership was sadly lacking. The numbers **seven** and **eight** simply indicate indefinitely the idea of "many"; cf. "three" and "four" in Amos 1:3 ff.

6. **Waste**; better, with margin, *shepherd*, *i.e.* exercise rule over, **with the sword**, inflicting punishment upon her for all her wickedness. **Nimrod** designates the whole territory of Babylonia and Assyria; cf. Gen. 10:8-11; 1 Chron. 1:16. **In the entrances thereof**; if correct, this means either the establishment of a blockade or the pursuit of fugitives into the mountain fastnesses. But the parallelism calls for a weapon; hence it is better to read, after Vulgate and Aquila, *with the drawn sword*. **And he shall deliver us**; better, *and they will rescue*, in parallelism with "they will shepherd," *i.e.* the many leaders will bring deliverance.

- as dew from the LORD,
 as showers upon the grass;
 That tarrieth¹ not for man,
 nor waiteth for the sons of men.
8. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations,
 in the midst of many peoples,
 as a lion among the beasts of the forest,²
 as a young lion among the flocks of sheep:
 Who, if he go through, treadeth down
 and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver.
9. Let thine hand be lifted up³ above thine adversaries,
 and let all thine enemies be cut off.

¹ Gr. *was gathered.* ² Syr. *beasts of the flock.* ³ Gr. *thine hand will be lifted up.*

This section (5 : 7-9) comes from a time when the scattering of the exiles throughout the world was an established fact and when the idea of the remnant had gathered to itself all the glory of the Messianic hope. It does not connect with vs. 5 and 6, for there Israel occupies its own territory; here she is dispersed over the face of the earth. Nor does it connect with the following context; for while Israel here is victor over the nations of the world, there she is herself the victim of Jehovah's wrath.

7. **Jacob** here includes all Israel, not Judah alone. **As dew**, etc.; the meaning of the figure seems to be that just as dew and rain cause the growth of herbage without the aid of irrigation, so Jehovah's favor and power will bring the remnant of Israel to victory over the nations, without any human help. Jehovah alone is Israel's all-sufficient aid.

8. **As a lion**, etc.; vs. 7 sets forth the source of Israel's strength; this shows that strength at work. Israel will be supreme among the nations, even as the lion among the denizens of the forest.

9. Carried away by the foregoing vision of triumph, some later reader added this pious comment. **Let thine hand**, etc.; better as in Greek, *thy hand will be high above thine enemies and all thy foes will be cut off*. Either Jehovah or the remnant may be addressed here; a closer connection is secured on the latter alternative.

XIV. ISRAEL CHASTENED AND CLEANSED, 5: 10-15

10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD,
that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee,
and will destroy thy chariots:
11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land,
and will throw down all thy strong holds:
12. And I will cut off witchcrafts¹ out of thine hand;
and thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers:
13. And I will cut off thy graven images and thy pillars²
out of the midst of thee;
and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine
hands.

¹ Gr. *thy witchcrafts*.² m. *obelisks*. Syr. *thine altars*.

Vss. 10-13 may be a fragment from Micah himself, for all of the conditions therein reflected were present in the eighth century B.C. and it is not impossible that Micah denounced them, even if preceding prophets ignored some of them and even if chaps. 1-3 do not attack these evils, but others. The question is best left open.

10. **Cut off thy horses**, etc.; cf. Zech. 9: 10; Hos. 14: 4; Deut. 17: 16; 20: 1.

11. The destruction of **cities** and **strong holds** will leave Judah defenceless. Sennacherib records that in the campaign of 705-701 he destroyed "forty-six strong walled cities" of Judah.

12. **Witchcrafts** and **soothsayers**, representative of Israel's effort to get help from other sources than Jehovah, will be destroyed even as the fortresses in which Israel is trusting. Israel will be left wholly without defence by him who is her only and all-sufficient defence.

13. **Graven images** and **thy pillars**; these were common in early Israel; cf. Judg. 17: 3, 4; Hos. 11: 2; 13: 2; Isa. 10: 10; 21: 9; Gen. 28: 18; 31: 13, 45. Idols were prohibited by the Decalogue (Exod. 20: 4) and denounced by Hosea and Isaiah. The **pillars** were first prohibited in the Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 16: 22), but held their place long afterwards, nevertheless. If this section be from Micah, it is the first recorded denunciation of the **pillars**.

14. And I will pluck up thine Asherim¹ out of the midst of thee:
and I will destroy thy cities.²
15. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations which³ hearkened not.⁴

XV. JEHOVAH'S CONTENTION WITH ISRAEL, 6: 1-5

6. Hear ye now⁵ what the LORD saith: ⁶
Arise, contend thou before the mountains,
and let the hills hear thy voice.
2. Hear, O ye mountains,⁷ the LORD'S controversy,
and ye enduring⁸ foundations of the earth:

¹ Gr. *the groves*. Syr. *thy plants*. ² m. *enemies*; so Tg. ³ Gr. *because they*.
⁴ m. *such as they have not heard*. ⁵ Gr. *adds the word*. ⁶ Gr. *said*. ⁷ Gr. *peoples*.
⁸ Gr. *mountain clefts*; similarly Syr. Vg. *strong*.

14. The latter half of this vs. adds nothing, being a weak repetition of vs. 11, and is probably a gloss. The threat against the **Asherim** singles out a special kind of idolatry, first specifically prohibited by the Deuteronomic Code (12: 3; 16: 21). The idol in question was a sacred wooden post and was worshipped near the altar by both Canaanites (Judg. 6: 2, 25; Exod. 34: 13) and Hebrews (2 Kings 23: 6; Isa. 17: 8). Its mention here probably belongs to the gloss.

15. This vs. has no relation to the foregoing vss.; it is an addition from an editor who could not let a denunciation of Israel's idolatry pass without a word regarding the great idolatrous heathen world. Hence, Jehovah's vengeance upon the heathen foretold as an offset to the preceding message of chastisement upon Israel. Their only chance of deliverance is in their turning from their idols and accepting Jehovah as their God.

This section (6: 1-5) lacks any specific marks of its date. It might have arisen at almost any time in the prophetic period. But its presence in the collection of late oracles making up chaps. 6 and 7 renders it probable that this passage is late like the rest.

1. **Contend** thou, or *plead*; the figure is that of a complainant in court. Before the mountains, as arbiters. The natural world is here represented as capable of passing upon moral questions, in the passion of the prophetic oratory.

2. The prophet now takes up the address. The Lord's con-

- For the LORD hath a controversy with his people,
and he will plead with Israel.
3. O my people, what have I done unto thee?
and wherein have I wearied thee?¹ testify against me.
 4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,
and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage;
and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
 5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of
Moab consulted,²
and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him;
Remember from Shittim³ unto Gilgal,
that ye may know the righteous acts of the LORD.

¹ Gr. adds *or wherein did I annoy thee?* ² Gr. and Syr. add *against thee.* ³ Gr. *from the rushes.*

trov^{er}sy; Jehovah is plaintiff; Israel is defendant; the mountains judge and jury; and the prophet is attorney for the plaintiff. And ye enduring foundations of the earth; the difficulties of grammar and style here make it necessary to correct the text to *Yea, give ear, O foundations of the earth.* The foundations are the mountains, thought of as pillars supporting the earth; cf. Deut. 32: 22; Ps. 18: 8.

3. Jehovah, through the prophet, now makes entreaty to Israel to show cause for its ingratitude and disobedience. Has he wronged her in any way? He himself is not conscious of any ill intention. No answer can be made, for Israel is without excuse.

4. Far from having injured Israel, Jehovah has, on the contrary, always been generous and kind, even from the very beginning of her history. **Miriam** is mentioned nowhere else by the prophets.

5. A reference to the events recorded in Numb. chaps. 22-24. The whole situation, fraught with terrible danger for Israel, is brought to mind and Israel is thus reminded of the way in which Jehovah saved her by frustrating the purpose of Balak. This prophet apparently takes the story at its face value, with all of its superstitious belief in the magical power of a curse. **Shittim** was the last camping station before the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 3: 1), while **Gilgal** was the first one afterward (Josh. 4: 20). In between lay all the marvellous story of the crossing — another

XVI. TRUE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED, 6:6-8

6. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before ¹ the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves of a year old?
7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? ²
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ³

¹ Gr. *and lay hold of*. ² Syr. *with strength of heifers*. ³ Syr. *I will not offer my firstborn — a sin is he to me; nor the fruits of my body — a sin of my soul are they to me*.

proof of Jehovah's love. **The righteous acts**, *i.e.* those acts which reveal his righteousness, not only to Israel, but to the world. They are really Jehovah's victories over Israel's foes, for which she should be unceasingly grateful.

The oracle is apparently incomplete, since it lacks any positive charge against Israel and also any announcement of punishment. It is apparently only a fragment.

This section (6:6-8) probably originated early in the post-exilic period. The point of view is that of the sage and teacher rather than the prophet; and the conception of religion is individualistic and universal, rather than national and particularistic as in Micah's time.

6. The questions here are, of course, rhetorical and intended to suggest the folly of current views and practices in religion. The popular thought of Jehovah represented him as a king, into whose presence one might not come without a gift; cf. Exod. 23:15; 34:20; 1 Sam. 6:2 ff.; 10:3 f.; 25:27; 2 Sam. 16:1 f. This was essentially a commercialized view of Jehovah; his favor was for sale to the highest bidder. Against this the prophets set themselves with one consent.

7. The value of the gifts is here greatly increased, the series culminating in the offering of the **firstborn**. Human sacrifice was practised in Israel from very early times until a relatively late date; cf. Exod. 13:13; Gen. 22:13; Judg. 11:34 ff.; 2 Kings 3:27; 16:3; 21:2 ff.; Jer. 7:21; 19:5; Ezek. 16:20; 20:26; Isa. 57:5. The practice seems to have been most prevalent in the time of Manasseh. The tremendous religious significance of such a sacrifice must not be overlooked. Such offerings are not made

8. He hath shewed thee,¹ O man, what is good;
and what doth the LORD require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly² with thy God?

XVII. THE SIN OF JERUSALEM AND THE COMING
JUDGMENT, 6: 9-16

9. The voice of the LORD crieth unto the city,
and *the man of wisdom*³ will see⁴ thy⁵ name:
Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.⁶

¹ Syr. and Vg. *I will shew thee.* Gr. *if it have been shown thee.* ² Gr. and Syr. *and to be ready.* ³ Gr. *and will save.* ⁴ Gr. *those fearing;* similarly Vg. and Syr. ⁵ Gr., Tg. and Syr. *his.* ⁶ Gr. *and who will adorn a city?* Vg. *and who will approve it?* Syr. *and who bears witness?* Tg. *and the rest of the people of the land.*

by men who wear their religion lightly. But they are the expression of a wrong idea of God and cannot, therefore, find favor with him.

8. After the foregoing negations there now follows the positive requirement. Good and obedience to the will of Jehovah are here made synonymous terms; such was always the Hebrew point of view. The content of religion as here set forth had been preached by Amos (5: 24), Hosea (6: 6), Isaiah (chap. 6), and Deuteronomy (10: 12-22; 22: 1-4). But this is the greatest single saying in the Old Testament. It makes ethics and simple piety to be the essential factors in religion and it breathes the spirit of the Gospel; cf. Math. 22: 34-40; Jas. 1: 27. It transfers the emphasis in religion from external actions to inner spirit. It ties duty toward God inseparably to duty toward man. It puts the whole force of the religious idea at the service of morality.

This section (6: 9-16) is wholly disconnected from the previous one. That dealt with instruction; this, with denunciation. Its date cannot be determined. It would suit any age from the days of Amos down to the end. It seems to presuppose some great danger to Jerusalem close at hand; but occasions of that kind were ever recurring.

9. The voice of the Lord crieth; better, *hark, Jehovah crieth.* The city; evidently Jerusalem. And the man of wisdom will see thy name. This is hardly susceptible of sensible interpretation.

10. Are there yet¹ the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,
and the scant measure that is abominable?²
11. Shall I³ be pure with wicked balances,
and with a bag of deceitful weights?
12. For the rich men thereof⁴ are full of violence,
and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies,
and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

¹ Gr. *is there fire*; similarly Syr. and Vg. ² Gr. *and unjust things with scorn*. Vg. *and the small measure full of wrath*. ³ Gr. *he*. Syr. and Tg. *they*. ⁴ Gr. *for their wealth*.

The Hebrew can only be rendered, *he who sees thy name is strong*; and "see thy name" is a strange idiom. It is better to make a slight change and read, *it is success to fear thy name*. This is a common sentiment; cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 14:27; Ps. 34:11; 111:10. **Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it**; if this be correct, **the rod** is a concrete representation of the punishment decreed by Jehovah. But aside from this, there are difficulties of grammar. It is better, following the Greek and Targum, to render, *hear, O tribe, and the assembly of the city*. This is a call parallel to that of the first line of the section. The "assembly" was the general meeting of citizens for the consideration of questions of public policy.

10. **Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked**; better, with some modification of text, *can I forget the treasures in the house of the wicked?* Such ill-gotten gains are always thrusting themselves upon Jehovah's attention and rendering it impossible for him to show favor. **And the scant measure that is abominable**; a very common crime in Israel and one easily perpetrated in days when rigidly fixed standards were unknown and when police power did not exist for the enforcement of such laws; cf. Am. 8:5; Deut. 25:14-16.

11. **Shall I be pure**, etc.; better, *can I treat as pure him with*, etc.; cf. Ps. 18:26. The people of Israel need not expect the rewards of a pious and just life, while they are full of lies and cheating.

12. **Thereof**; *i.e.* of the city addressed in vs. 9. The wealthy have grown rich through oppression and injustice; cf. Am. 3:10; 6:3; Zeph. 1:9; **The inhabitants**, all without discrimination, **have spoken lies**; the rich were oppressive; the common people seek the same ends by lying and cheating; all are equally bad.

13. Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound;¹
 I have made thee desolate because of thy sins.
14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;
 and thy humiliation² shall be in the midst of thee:
 And thou shalt remove,³ but shalt not carry away safe;
 and that which thou carriest away will I give up to the sword.
15. Thou shalt sow, but shalt not reap:
 thou shalt tread the olives, but shalt not anoint thee with oil;
 and the vintage, but shalt not drink the wine.⁴
16. For the statutes of Omri are kept,⁵

¹ Gr. *I will begin to smite thee.* ² m. *thy emptiness.* Gr. *it will be dark.* Syr. *thy dysentery.* ³ Vg. *seize;* so Syr., Tg. ⁴ Gr. and Syr. omit *the wine.* ⁵ Gr., Syr., Tg. and Vg. *thou keepest.*

13. Therefore I also have smitten thee with a grievous wound; better, after the Greek, *I will begin to smite thee*, a threat of what is about to befall Jerusalem. I have made thee desolate; better, continuing the preceding sentence, *to lay thee in ruins.*

14. Thou shalt eat, etc.; shut up in a besieged city, the supply of food will run short. And thy humiliation; this word is wholly unknown; the context seems better satisfied by some such rendering as "thy hunger" or "thy emptiness." Thou shalt remove, etc.; all attempts to escape with their goods will fail. Destruction awaits all.

15. The enjoyment of the fruits of their labors will be denied them, because of the approach of invading foes; cf. Deut. 28: 30 ff. This is the only passage which directly mentions the treading of the olives; cf. Joel. 2: 24. The finest oil was beaten out; Exod. 27: 20; Lev. 24: 2. But the greater quantity was trodden out. Anoint thee with oil; a common practice in hot climates; cf. Am. 6: 2; 2 Sam. 12: 20; 14: 2; Ruth 3: 3; 2 Chron. 28: 15.

16. The statutes of Omri; no specific laws are elsewhere credited to Omri. It is probable that this simply means that the life of Judah and Jerusalem is reproducing that of the Northern Kingdom, the sins of which brought ruin in 721 B.C. Omri and

and all the works of the house of Ahab,
and ye walk in their counsels :
That I should make thee a desolation,¹
and the inhabitants thereof an hissing ;
and ye shall bear the reproach of my people.²

XVIII. THE FAITHLESSNESS OF ISRAEL, 7 : 1-6

7. Woe is me ! for I am
as when they have gathered³ the summer fruits, as
the grape gleanings of the vintage :
There is no cluster to eat ;
my soul desireth the firstripe fig.⁴
2. The godly man is perished out of the earth,
and there is none upright among men :
They all lie in wait⁵ for blood ;⁶
they hunt⁷ every man his brother with a net.⁸

¹ m. an astonishment. ² Gr. of peoples. ³ Gr. and Vg. as one who gathers. ⁴ m. nor firstripe fig which my soul desired. ⁵ Gr. all strive. ⁶ Syr. omits for blood. ⁷ Gr. oppress. ⁸ Gr. with oppression. Vg. to death. Syr. and Tg. to destruction.

Ahab are named as the strongest and most representative kings of the north. **That I should make thee a desolation**, etc.; a common Hebrew point of view, which attributes what was the inevitable, though undesigned, consequence of an act to the deliberate purpose of the actor. **The reproach of my people**; better, with the Greek, *the scorn of the peoples*, i.e. the surrounding nations will laugh Judah to scorn in the midst of her woes.

The date of this section (7 : 1-6) cannot be definitely indicated. The general situation reflected seems to be more easily explained as belonging to the post-exilic age. But a better knowledge of Israel's history might reveal a pre-exilic period which could be characterized as here.

1. Zion is here speaking and says, *I am become like the gatherings of the summer fruit, like the gleanings of the vintage. There is not a cluster to eat, not an early fig that my soul desires.* Zion likens herself to one seeking fruit after the fruit harvest is past, doomed to the pangs of disappointment and hunger.

2. The **godly** and the **upright** are those represented by the

3. Their hands are upon that which is evil¹ to do it diligently;²
 the prince asketh, and the judge *is ready* for a reward;³
 And the great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul:
 thus they weave it together.⁴
4. The best of them is as a brier:⁵
 the most upright⁶ is *worse* than a thorn hedge:⁷

¹ m. both hands are put forth for evil. ² Syr. their hands they make ready for evil and they do not good. Gr. they made ready their hands unto evil. Vg. over the evil of their hands they say good. ³ Syr. the prince asks, give; and the judge says, give a bribe. ⁴ Gr. and I will take away. Syr. and they reject. Vg. they have confused it. ⁵ Gr. as a devouring moth. Syr. like a rag. ⁶ Syr. which is torn in pieces. Gr. and travels slowly. ⁷ m. the straightest is, as it were, taken from a thorn hedge. Syr. by the moth. Vg. like a thorn from a hedge. Gr. according to a canon.

“grapes” and “figs” of vs. 1. The earth is rather *the land*, i.e. Palestine. For a similarly hopeless state of society, cf. Ps. 12:2; Isa. 57:1; Jer. 5:1. They all lie in wait for blood, etc.; the methods of the hunter are here described as representative of the heartless devices by which Israelites seek to obtain the advantage one over another. They are mad with lust for wealth. Human rights are ignored.

3. Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently; better, following the Greek, *they have made ready their hands to do evil*. The accused have deliberately prepared themselves for evil deeds; cf. Jer. 4:22; 13:23. The prince asketh and the judge is ready for a reward; the words *is ready* are not in the Hebrew; the original text was probably, *the prince asks for a bribe*, the phrase *and the judge* having been inserted later to show what aspect of the prince's activity is meant; cf. 2 Sam. 15:2 ff.; 1 Kings 3:16 ff. Bribery seems to be the inveterate habit of the Oriental. And the great man, etc.; the wealthy and influential individual expresses his wish and it is realized for him by the judges whose decisions are for sale. Thus they weave it together; the precise meaning of the Hebrew here is dubious, but the general sense must be that through the conspiracy of the ruling classes the ordinary citizen is in devious ways robbed of his rights.

4. The best of them is as a brier; rough and ugly to deal with, but at the same time susceptible to easy and quick destruction; cf. Exod. 22:6; Isa. 9:18; 10:17. The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge; this does not represent the Hebrew, which

- The day of thy watchmen,¹ even thy visitation,²
 is come ;
 now shall be their perplexity.³
5. Trust ye not in a friend,
 put ye not confidence in a guide :
 Keep the doors of thy mouth
 from her that lieth in thy bosom.
6. For the son dishonoureth the father,
 the daughter riseth up against her mother,
 The daughter in law against her mother in law ;
 a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

XIX. THE DOWNFALL OF THE FOE, 7:7-10

7. But as for me, I will look unto the LORD ;⁴
 I will wait for the God of my salvation :⁵

¹ Gr. *on the day of watching*. Vg. *the day of thy watching*. ² Gr. *alas, alas, thy*
vengeances. ³ Gr. *their wailings*. Vg. *their devastation*. ⁴ m. *in the Lord will I keep*
watch. ⁵ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *God my saviour*.

says *more just than a hedge*, yielding no sense. It is better, with a slight correction, to read, *the most upright of them is like a hedge*, suggestive of roughness or obstruction; cf. Prov. 15:19. The **day of thy watchmen**, etc.; viz. thy prophets, who from the beginning have announced the coming of the day of Jehovah. **Their perplexity**; or *their rout*.

5. **A guide**; better, *an intimate*. In ascending climax ending with the wife, the faithlessness of all men, even one's most intimate friends and relatives, is pointed out. There is no slur upon woman especially; she simply shares the general depravity.

6. Insubordination and lack of filial piety were unpardonable sins among Semites; cf. Exod. 20:12; 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18 ff.; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20; and the Code of Hammurabi, §§ 186, 192, 195.

This section (7:7-10) originated somewhere in the exilic or post-exilic age. Israel is no longer looking forward to punishment, but is already enduring it. The later attitude of bitterness toward the nations is plainly present here.

7. The **I** of this vs. is contrasted with something else; but no satisfactory contrast is present in this context. The vs. is appar-

-
8. my God will hear me.
 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy :
 when I fall, I shall arise ;
 When I sit in darkness,
 the LORD shall be a light unto me.
9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD,
 because I have sinned against him ;
 Until he plead my cause,
 and execute judgement for me :
 He will bring me forth to the light,
 and I shall behold his righteousness.
10. Then mine enemy shall see it,
 and shame shall cover her
-

ently a fragment originally belonging to some other context. The speaker may be either an individual in distress or the Jewish community which is expressing its confidence in the coming of Jehovah's aid.

8. **Mine enemy**; probably a collective term, including all of Judah's enemies. **I shall arise**; such faith in Jehovah and confidence regarding the future were characteristic of all the later prophets. It is one of the marvels of history. **Darkness** and **light** commonly represent calamity and prosperity respectively; cf. Am. 5: 18; Isa. 62: 1 ff.; Job 30: 26.

9. **I will bear**; or *I must bear*. All Semites attributed misfortunes, national or individual, to the anger of the gods. Israel was keenly conscious of the burden of Jehovah's wrath; cf. 2 Kings 23: 26 f.; 24: 20; Isa. 42: 24 f. **Until he plead my cause**, etc.; Jehovah's anger will not last forever. When his wrath against Judah is satisfied, he will take up her cause against the nations, to the utter confusion of the latter; cf. Ps. 103: 9; Zech. 1: 15 f. **His righteousness** is here, as in Isa. chaps. 40-55, equivalent to Israel's vindication. The piety of Israel, as compared with the nations, makes it incumbent upon the justice of God to vindicate her against her foes. Only so can he be righteous.

10. The vindication of Israel involves the putting to shame of her foes. There are combined here the joy of seeing Jehovah's enemies overwhelmed and the satisfaction for which the long oppressed human spirit cries out; cf. Nah. chap. 3; Ps. 109;

Which said unto me,
 where is the LORD thy God?
 Mine eyes shall behold her:
 now shall she be trodden down
 as the mire of the streets.

XX. RESTORATION AND RETURN, 7: 11-13

11. A day for building thy walls,¹
 in that day shall the decree² be far removed.
 12. In that day shall they come unto thee,³
 from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,⁴
 And from Egypt⁵ even to the River,
 and from sea to sea, and *from* mountain⁶ to⁷ moun-
 tain.
 13. Yet shall the land be desolate
 because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of
 their doings.

¹ m. in the day that thy walls are to be built. ² m. boundary. ³ Gr. come thy cities. Syr. come thy time. ⁴ Gr., Syr., Vg. and Tg. the border. ⁵ Gr. and unto a division from Tyre; similarly Syr. ⁶ Syr. and Hor. ⁷ Gr. and Vg. from.

and Obadiah. Where is the Lord thy God? a stereotyped taunt at the powerlessness of Jehovah; cf. 2 Kings 18: 34; Joel 2: 17; Ps. 79: 10; 115: 2. Behold her, or gaze upon her, with gloating satisfaction; cf. Obad. vss. 12, 13; Ezek. 28: 17; Ps. 22: 18.

This prophecy (7: 11-13) originated somewhere in the period between the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the rebuilding of the walls in the days of Nehemiah; cf. vs. 11.

11. A day for building thy walls; the address is to Jerusalem, which is promised that the walls now shattered will be restored. In that day shall the decree be far removed; better, *will the boundary be far distant*. An expansion of territory is here promised.

12. From Assyria and the cities of Egypt; better, with an easy correction of the text, *from Assyria even to Egypt*. This assures the return of the Jewish exiles from all over the Oriental world. Even to the River, *i.e.* the Euphrates. From sea to sea, etc.; no particular seas and mountains are meant. It is rather an indefinite expression equivalent to "from one end of the world to the other."

XXI. A PRAYER FOR JEHOVAH'S AID, 7 : 14-20

14. Feed¹ thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage,
 which dwell solitarily, in the forest² in the midst of Carmel:
 Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.
15. as in the days of thy³ coming forth out of the land of⁴ Egypt will I show unto him⁵ marvellous things.

¹ m. rule. ² Syr. *solitarily, sheep*. ³ Syr. and Tg. *their*. ⁴ Gr. omits *the land of*.
⁵ Gr. *ye shall see*. Syr. and Tg. *I will shew them*.

13. The land; better, *the earth*; not Canaan, but the earth in general, where the foes of Israel dwell; cf. Jer. 49: 13, 17; 50: 23; Zeph. 2: 13, 15; Joel 3: 19. Their doings; which have been from the prophets' point of view essentially evil.

This closing section of the book (7: 14-20) seems to have come from the later days. The people are in reduced circumstances and long for a manifestation of Jehovah's power in their behalf. They crave vengeance upon their oppressors. This passage and vs. 9-10 reflect the same general attitude and may well have come from the same times.

14. Feed, or *shepherd*; cf. Ps. 23: 1 ff.; 28: 9. Thy rod, or *thy staff*, the shepherd's crook. Thine heritage; or *thy possession*; cf. Isa. 63: 17; Jer. 10: 16; Deut. 4: 20; 9: 26. Carmel; better, *a garden*; the figure is representative of Israel confined to the bare hilltops of Judah, access to the fertile plains being cut off, since these are held by foes. Let them feed, or *may they feed*; the prayer is that Israel may be given back all its former territory, even the regions east of the Jordan, which were lost irrevocably in 734 B.C.

15. Thy coming forth; the Exodus is thus represented also in Judg. 5: 4. Will I show unto him; Jehovah must be the speaker, but this is irreconcilable with "*thy coming forth*." Hence, it seems necessary to read as an imperative, viz. *show us*. The prophet pleads for Jehovah's marvellous interposition, as in the wonderful days of old.

16. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might:
they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf.
17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent; like¹ crawling things of the earth
they shall come trembling out of their close places:²
They shall come with fear unto the LORD our God,
and shall be afraid because of thee.³
18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?
He⁴ retaineth not his anger for ever,⁵ because he⁴ delighteth in mercy.

¹ Gr. omits *like*. ² Syr. *from their paths*. Gr. *in their dens*. ³ Syr. omits *because of thee*. ⁴ Syr. *thou*. ⁵ Gr. *for a witness*.

16. **The nations shall see**, etc.; it is better here, and in vs. 17, to translate the verbs as precatives, viz. *may the nations see and be ashamed of all their might; may they lay hand upon mouth; and may their ears be deaf*. The vaunted power of the nations is so puny in comparison with that of Jehovah, that a revelation of the latter to them would paralyze all their powers; cf. Judg. 18: 19; Isa. 52: 15; Job 21: 5; 29: 9; 40: 4.

17. **They shall lick**; or better, *may they lick dust*, etc., i.e. prostrate themselves upon the ground before Jehovah. **They shall come trembling out of their close places**; or *may they come trembling out of their dens*, whither they will have fled in terror. The state of mind called for in this and the following pleas is one eminently fitting for the nations that had so long taunted Israel with the powerlessness of her God.

18. **Who is a God like unto thee**; a common thought in the Old Testament; cf. Exod. 15: 11; Ps. 71: 19; 77: 14; 86: 8. The point of comparison elsewhere is always the power of Jehovah; here it is his mercy. Yet the thought of this power has been strongly expressed in vss. 16 and 17. But this forgiving mercy is limited to the remnant of his heritage; viz. the survivors of afflicted Judah. **He retaineth not his anger for ever**, etc.; a common idea in the Psalter; e.g. 25: 10; 30: 6; 32: 10.

19. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; he will tread ¹ our iniquities under foot: and thou ² wilt cast all their ³ sins into the depths of the sea.
20. Thou wilt perform ⁴ the truth ⁵ to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from ⁶ the days of old.

¹ m. *subdue*. Syr. *and he will gather together*. ² Syr., Tg. and Vg. *he*. Gr. *they will be*. ³ Gr., Syr. and Vg. *our*. ⁴ Gr. *he will give*. ⁵ m. *thou wilt shew thy faithfulness*. ⁶ Gr. *according to*.

19. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; better, *he will again show us mercy*. His kindness of old warrants faith in its repetition. **Tread our iniquities under foot**; as though they were serpents or enemies of some other kind to be overthrown. Such treatment of sins is not elsewhere mentioned in the Old Testament. **Their sins**; better, with the versions, *our sins*.

20. **Jacob** and **Abraham** here represent the existing community of their descendants. These names recall the kindness of Jehovah in the past; cf. Exod. 34:6. **Which thou hast sworn**, etc.; referring perhaps to Gen. 22:16 ff. and 28:13 f. in particular, but in general to all the prophets' promises.

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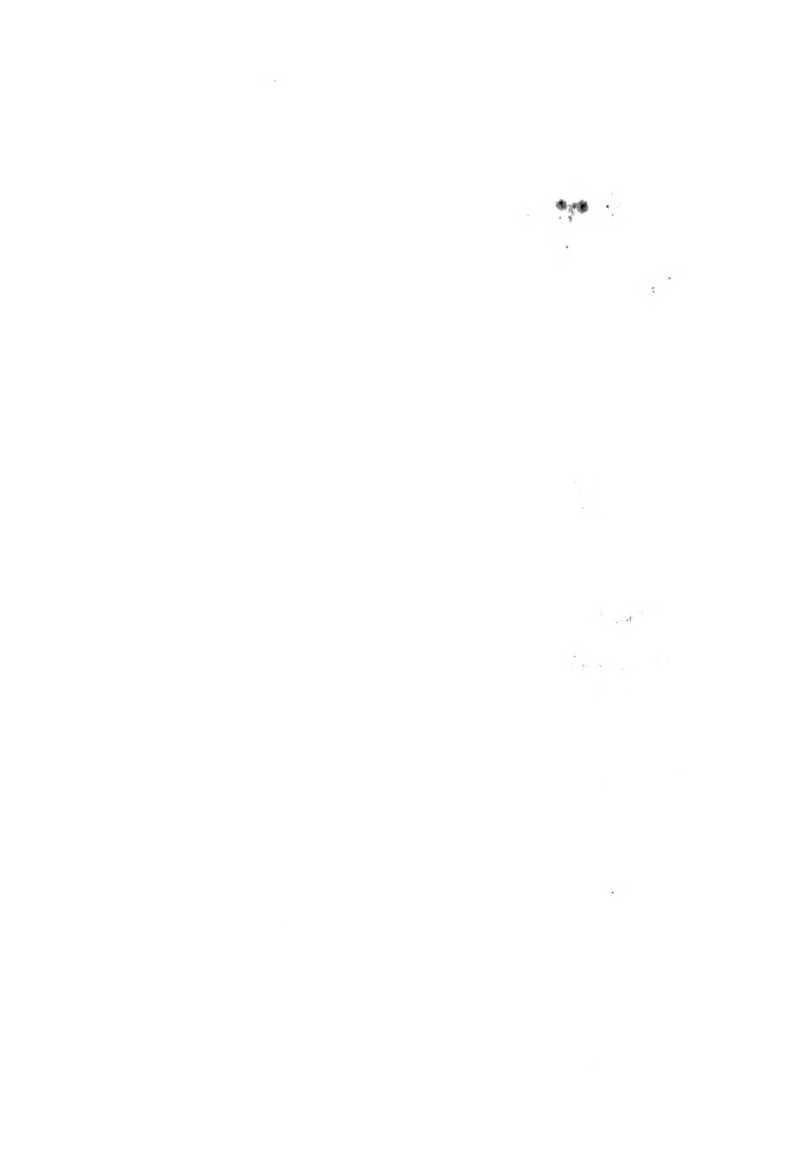
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